THE FAITH BY WHICH WE LIVE

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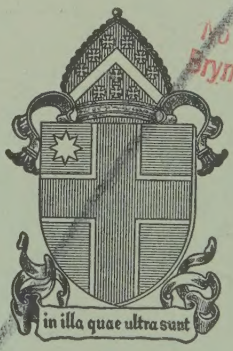

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THE FAITH BY WHICH WE LIVE

The Faith By Which We Live

A PLAIN, PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE RELIGION OF THE INCARNATE LORD

By the Right Reverend
CHARLES FISKE, D.D., LL.D.
Bishop Coadjutor of Central New York
Author of "The Experiment of Faith", "Back to Christ", "Sacrifice and Service", etc.

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

CHARLES ANDREWS

a courteous Gentleman, a great Citizen, a distinguished Jurist, a faithful Churchman, a devout, sincere, and consistent Christian

I DEDICATE

this volume, because his urgent suggestion (in a request made a few months before his death) led to its publication. May it train others in the Faith, teach them to love the Church, and help them to live the Truth, that so they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

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PREFACE

THIS practical little book aims to present in popular form, free from technicalities, some of the great foundation truths of Christianity as they are related to life. It is a thorough revision and rearrangement, with some additions, of a work which I published some years ago under the title, *The Religion of the Incarnation.* The revision and rewriting have made it practically a new book and I have given it, therefore, a new name. In its earlier form the book has been out of print for several years. I have delayed reissuing it, first, because of doubts as to the real need of another edition, and second, because I was not content to have it reprinted without the revision it has now had.

Repeated requests for its publication have convinced me that it still has real usefulness. There seems to be no other book which quite takes its place. When the clergy of Porto Rico tried to find a popular manual for translation into Spanish for use in Latin America, they could discover nothing which better met their need and it has lately been translated and published and given a wider circulation as printed in monthly installments in *El Nuevo Siglo.*

While the revision has made it a new book, I have been surprised, nevertheless, to discover how little it needed change in substance rather than form. The old truths of our religion are ever new. New facts but show the vital power of the old faith. The terrible years of war through which the world has passed would have driven one mad, were it not that we had that faith to live by. A gospel that tells of a God who entered into the tragedy of human life and understands and sympathizes has been the only gospel for years of trial and dark struggle. I wonder if others of the clergy have been discovering, as I have, not that they cannot preach the old faith, but that they can preach nothing else. The things we used to say have not lost their value; they have gained new force. With but the change of a sentence or two in their practical application, they bring new messages for men and women of a new age.

I wonder, too, whether others have felt, almost as a new revelation, the deep significance and practical power of the faith we have been preaching—but possibly, until now, preaching somewhat academically. In a remarkable charge to his clergy, delivered during some of the darkest days of the war, the Bishop of Oxford showed how the dominant ideas which have been laying hold of men—the idea of liberty for all and of the equal spiritual worth of every individual; the conception of brotherhood and of sacrificial service; the larger ideal of the fellowship of the nations in a world-wide human commu-

[1] Gore: *Dominant Ideas and Corrective Principles.*

nity—are really Christian ideas and are necessarily involved in any honest interpretation of the Gospel. In its great task of self-reformation and world-redemption, the Bishop summons the Christian community to return with the old enthusiasm, to the old religion of the Creed, the Bible, the Church, and the Sacraments, but to interpret these in terms of what is interesting everyone who has a heart to feel and a brain to think and so "to make men feel afresh that Jesus Christ is the true prophet of liberty, brotherhood, and catholicity".

The purpose of this book is much simpler and more elementary; but in its humbler way it points out the same lesson—not so much by way of showing the religious and moral changes which the great world catastrophe has brought about and the Christian answer to the problems it presents (this has been done by others in the years when we were in the thick of the conflict), as by stating what the Gospel revelation and the Gospel scheme of redemption really are and the grounds on which we accept both—and stating this in the every-day language of every-day people.

I do not like to call this a manual of instruction. It is that, but I hope it is more. It is a plain, practical, common-sense exposition of the Christian faith, written in language that the average, every-day man can understand; but it is not—or I hope it is not—just a summary and explanation of a series of dry doctrines. It is both creed and conduct, belief and practice, dogma and devotion—a statement of faith,

but the statement of a faith by which men live. The doctrines of Christianity are but the logical exponents of its facts. We accept them, not as mere items of information, but as interpretations of those facts which are the springs and sources of the Christian life—that life to which we would re-dedicate ourselves in these days of splendid service.

Syracuse, New York. C. F.

CONTENTS

I.—Creed and Conduct - - - - - - - - 1
II.—Why I Believe in God - - - - - - - 15
III.—The Holy Trinity - - - - - - - - - 25
IV.—The Divinity of Jesus Christ - - - - 33
V.—The Incarnation of Our Lord - - - - 40
VI.—The Incarnation and God's Love - - - 49
VII.—The Incarnation and God's Personality 56
VIII.—The Incarnation and God's Presence - 62
IX.—Sin and the Fall - - - - - - - - - 68
X.—The Atonement - - - - - - - - - - 77
XI.—The Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver - - - 86
XII.—The Practice of Prayer - - - - - - 94
XIII.—Christ and His Church - - - - - - 108
XIV.—Choosing a Church - - - - - - - - 123
XV.—The Extension of the Incarnation - - 137
XVI.—The Incarnation Applied - - - - - 147
XVII.—The Baptismal Gift - - - - - - - 156
XVIII.—Infant Baptism - - - - - - - - - 166
XIX.—The Eucharistic Sacrifice - - - - - 175
XX.—The Holy Communion - - - - - - - 185
XXI.—The Eucharistic Presence - - - - - 192
XXII.—Preparation for Holy Communion - - 200
XXIII.—Confession and Absolution - - - - - 209

XXIV.—The Christian Priesthood - - - - - 220
XXV.—The Apostolic Succession - - - - - 230
XXVI.—Confirmation and Other Sacraments - 243
XXVII.—The Bible and Its Inspiration - - - 249
XXVIII.—Some Bible Problems - - - - - - - 258
XXIX.—The Certainty of a Future Life - - - 266
XXX.—The Proof of the Resurrection - - - 272
XXXI.—The Faithful Departed - - - - - - 281
XXXII.—The Intermediate State - - - - - - 292
XXXIII.—Heaven and Hell - - - - - - - - 301
XXXIV.—The Angelic World - - - - - - - 313

The Faith By Which We Live

I.

CREED AND CONDUCT

THOSE who have been engaged in religious work in the home camps or abroad, during the years of the Great War now happily ended, have had unusual opportunities to judge of the religious life of America and of the general effectiveness of our Church work. The tale they bring has not been altogether encouraging.

The vast majority of the millions of Americans enrolled as soldiers and sailors professed some religion. This profession was usually definite enough to include preference for some particular religious body, if not the claim of adherence to it. But of those who stated that they were identified with some Christian denomination large numbers admitted, in response to questions, that they rarely if ever go to church. Attendance at public worship is at best infrequent, irregular, and spasmodic, often confined to a service now and then on some special occasion for a sermon to the lodge, or something of a similar sort. While

the mass of men are listed as giving some religious preference, an appallingly large per cent. of them report that they are not baptized. They do not know the reasons for baptism and apparently have never heard any explanation of its meaning or necessity. This is particularly true of one of the great middle western camps where a faithful canvass was made by the chaplains. In most cases investigation was not carried so far, but there are indications that the facts are about the same everywhere. Young fellows who have sung in choirs, some who as boys have been members of vested choirs for several years, have never seen a baptism nor heard a word about that sacrament either in sermon or instruction.

As to the men who state that they are Church members fully fifty per cent. of those questioned admit that they have not received Communion in years; some have never received. They do not know how the Holy Communion is administered or the reasons for its celebration.

Among all the men there is found a pathetic ignorance of the Bible and of the simplest facts of Christianity. Though brought up in so-called Bible churches, whose chief boast is that they teach the Word, large numbers of men have no knowledge of Scripture beyond a vague remembrance of a few scattered texts, some of the verses of the shepherd psalm, an Old Testament story like that of David and Goliath, one or two of the parables, perhaps an incident in the life of Christ. Few of them have any clear idea of our Lord's life as a whole. They know

something of the Christmas story and (less clearly) the story of Good Friday—that is all. No one has ever taught them (at least not in such a way as to fix it in their memory) who Christ was, when He was born, where He lived, what He did, why He was put to death, how He rose. Certainly they do not know the tremendous claims He made or the traditional interpretation of the meaning of His life. They do not really understand the simplest statements of Christian belief. The creeds are a sealed book. Often (so it would seem) they have heard little of creeds, though they have a rather definite prejudice against dogmas or doctrines—"a plain man has no use for them" they declare.

Finally, they do not pray. Pressed for reasons, they say that it does no good or that nobody ever taught them how. At any rate, many of them when questioned admit that they do not say their prayers, either on their knees or after they have tumbled into bed, unless we except an occasional recital of the Lord's prayer or some childish rhyming petition.

This is not, of course, a criticism of the soldier. Assuredly not. The men whose religious convictions and practices we have had an opportunity of observing are a cross section of American society, representing every class and type of American life. What they are is what America is—if it is as good. What they believe and do is about what the mass of the American people believe and do. What they are ignorant of we may fairly suppose are the things of which American men generally, in about the same proportion, are

ignorant or to which they are indifferent. Of course there are numbers of active Church members and equally of course many of these are well-instructed and consistent in the practice of their religion, but the number of men who are not is a serious indictment of American Christianity and to most people an unexpected revelation of the inefficiency of American church organizations.

I repeat that this is not a criticism of the soldier. Some of us who have taken the trouble to investigate know what religious conditions are in rural America and in villages and small towns—conditions that led the late President Hyde to select as the title of a study of rural conditions "Impending Paganism in New England." I talk with all sorts of people as I travel about the country and I know that even the most startling figures of the weakness of Christianity in the small towns do not tell half the story. If we could get as thorough a survey of city life we should not find it much better.[1]

Nor must it be supposed that this plain statement of facts is an attack upon the soldier's morals. Grave moral problems were revealed by the draft, it is true, but never have these problems been faced as frankly and fearlessly as now and never has there been so thorough a campaign of education or so effective a programme of protection. Young men in France and in camp here were safer than young men at home.

The tremendously encouraging thing to which all

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[1] See my *Sacrifice and Service*, pages 3-6.

Christian warworkers testify is that our men have shown a fine, sturdy moral earnestness and conviction. With all their ignorance they are really religious at heart. Were it not for the reticence and reserve which is characteristic of most men when religion is discussed, we should probably learn even more for our encouragement, but there are indications in plenty that the soul of the soldier is sound. An overseas test made repeatedly among soldiers everywhere, from the landing ports to the trenches, showed that an overwhelming majority of the men have very clear ideas as to what they consider to be cardinal virtues and contemptible sins. Courage, unselfishness, generosity, and modesty or humility make up their code of morals. All these are "bed rock" virtues. A well-known American evangelist, Mr. Fred B. Smith, who has had unusual opportunities for observing the men and talking with them frankly, declares that the more one studies the set of standards which the young men put before them the more one is amazed at the unerring way in which they have picked out the great essentials of character. "I do not claim," he says, "that all men have these standards. The draft was a great net which drew together millions of men of all classes, all degrees of education. They are not angels! Some of them are far from it. But the code here given does express the prevailing sentiment of the mass of the men."

My own experience, once more, has taught me to be an optimist about the average man everywhere. He has very simple ideas of religion but he always

gets down to essentials. To him religion means unselfishness, generosity, sincerity, cleanliness of soul, a genuineness and straightforward honesty that despises cant and therefore is chary of religious professions, an abiding faith in goodness, a very real humility because of his own defects (or, as we should say, sins) and a readiness, for that reason, to forgive defects or sins in others. He has only a vague consciousness of God and yet somehow, whether he prays or not, we feel that he *is* conscious of Him—as the child is conscious of the mother in another part of the house and would miss her if he knew she had gone away.[2]

All this gives us courage, but it is the courage of brave endeavor to make the most of the essential virtues, not the audacity which leads us to deny unpleasant facts. Camp and field and hospital have given wonderful testimony to the splendid possibilities of humanity. Only, as Hankey reminds us, men fail to connect these things with Jesus Christ, much less do they connect them with His Church. They do not see that the virtues they admire come to fruition in Christian soil. The pity of it is that, because men have not really known Christianity, we have been missing all this fine service and men have failed to develop their latent possibilities. What splendid things we might have done, with such material to work on!

The fundamental moral ideas are instinctive. Under the generous impulse of service and sacrifice

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[2] See *The Experiment of Faith*, chapter iii.

in stirring times they are manifested in a splendid way. But—they are so easily forgotten. Men's morals fall so quickly when the props and supports are gone. At the high call they rise to splendid heights, but in humdrum days ideals are dulled all too soon. The man who has the courage of the crisis often fails in the courage of the commonplace and the moral instincts are less clear when it is only ordinary duty that calls them out.

Once more: Even if the heart of America is right, as we really believe it is, it is right in spite of our religious incompetence. There is still a lot of "diffused Christianity" in the world. Men are living by the impulses and motives of a former faith. Ideals of religious and god-fearing ancestors are not rooted up in a generation. Many a man who gives no time to prayer or public worship and little thought to religion and morals has an instinctive "faith of inheritance".

But what about the next generation? We were drifting far and fast, here in America, were we not? We had got a long way off from the old moral moorings. Our spiritual consciousness was sadly dulled, our religious instincts sadly weakened, our moral restraints sadly relaxed, our standards sadly lowered. Fortunately for us, the war came before it was too late —war which stripped us of some of our creature comforts and made the things of the spirit loom larger, war which summoned us to fight for an ideal, war against enemies who had made sin so hideously ugly that it has to some extent shamed it out of our own

hearts. We were preserved from utter surrender to love of luxury, selfish ease, materialism, moral indifference, money-madness. And we have discovered that at the core American life is still sound. It is not too late to save us.

An officer overseas puts it clearly in a letter sent to me recently: "Now that the brutality, bestiality, and crimes against women have shown me here in devastated France how horrible sin can become, I have asked myself often why I am as decent a man as I am, for I frankly acknowledge that I have not been very keen on religion. I have come to the conclusion that most of my goodness is inherited goodness. I have made up my mind that if I get back I shall do more to pass on to my children what I got from devout, religious parents. I shall try to create in my home more of the Christian atmosphere in which I was brought up. I don't want my boy to start handicapped."

I honestly believe that only in Jesus Christ shall we find sure salvation. I want to make men understand that all the ideals of goodness they ever had are found in Christ—and found there to perfection. I want them to recognize their unacknowledged debt to Christ. I want them to see, also, that everything Christ was God is. I want them to have moral strength and permanence and I believe that in Him is the only source of moral power which is sure and unfailing. I do not believe that Christian morals will last long apart from Christian faith and I think,

therefore, that it is important for the churches to inaugurate a campaign of instruction—not merely a preaching crusade or mission but a campaign of careful, regular, systematic, practical instruction. We must have "a reason for the hope that is in us". Unless our moral life is deep rooted, it will soon wither.

Men, whether in camp or at home, are wonderfully responsive to straight, definite Christian teaching. They are sick unto death of the second and third rate lecturettes on ethics which we have substituted for Christian preaching. They are weary beyond expression of pulpit appeals to patriotism, denunciations of "booze" and attacks upon evils everybody recognizes and nobody fears to condemn. (They want religion linked up to life, but if evils are to be assailed there are crying social and economic evils which it takes courage to mention!) They want something strong and definite, instead of the weak, watery, colorless stream of platitudinous moralizing with which they have been deluged from Sunday school days on. Their happy-go-lucky acquiescence in an indefinite religion is not their fault. Says one chaplain,[8] whose opportunities for observation have been unusually wide:

"With most of the men, one meets not merely with no resentment but with a positive interest in religion from the beginning. Vital Christianity 'hits them where they live'. Simple, virile preaching of

[8] The Rev. Bernard Iddings Bell.

God, of His importance, His reality, His friendship, His power, His sternness, His love, of the need for repentance, of the need for that help which is sometimes, but not in the camp, called 'grace', of the grim viciousness of that animal selfishness which is called 'sin', of the strength and manliness of the God-Man Jesus Christ, of the heroism of Calvary, of the possibility of our becoming, with His help, like Him, real men and not mere 'beasts that walk on our hind legs', of the Church as the blessed company of His friends, of the sacraments as human touches from a present Lord—they love it! I have heard them applaud and cheer it. I have seen them pour out after sermons and thank the preacher for it—not the sentimental goody-goodys, but big, strong, husky fellows with grips of steel."

This book has been written to supply the need of instruction. It gives practical if solid teaching, on which more popular courses of instruction may be based.

What is written here is grounded in the assumption that what a man believes is as important as what he does, just because as a rule what he does will depend on what he believes. One cannot divorce creed and character. The Christian character is really the outcome of the Christian creed. If we surrender the creed, with its insistence upon the facts of our Lord's life, in time we shall lose the character which sprang out of it. Never again will it be possible to say, with casual and careless finality, that it makes no difference

what a man believes. Prussianism has stamped the lie forever on that plausible untruth.

After all, what are dogmas? It is always well to define terms: what, then, are Christian dogmas? Simply the logical statement of Christian facts. Many of those who object to doctrinal teaching are sincere believers in Jesus Christ. Let us start there. Who was He? What was He? Where are we to learn about Him? How does He bring us the life eternal? How are we to keep it? How does He save us and how and where are we to receive the benefit of the work He has done for us? These and a hundred other questions spring up at once and Christian dogmas are nothing more nor less than the answers to such questions. It is quite evident that the important thing is to follow Christ, even though we cannot adequately define Him, but the kind of obedience we render and the faithfulness of our following in His steps will depend on our answers to questions like these. One who is alive to the meaning of Christ's life for his own soul will not rest satisfied until he has learned all that can be known about the Master—what were His relations to the Father whom He came to reveal, on what His authority rests, whether or not He is an infallible guide, why He may demand our allegiance and our love.

If we were to teach doctrine as a mere shibboleth, excluding all who cannot frame to pronounce some test word aright, men could not condemn us too strongly. Dogma divorced from life would be useless —worse than useless. But if the doctrines of Chris-

tianity are simply the logical expression of its facts, we cannot be rid of creeds even if we would.

Every doctrine of the creed has its influence on conduct. Our whole thought of the purpose of life depends on our grasp of these spiritual realities. The conception of God as a moral governor is that which gives us a moral standard of action. The conception of a Future Life gives us support in all our perplexities; by it we are led to believe that we see only a fragment of a vast scheme and that injustice and oppression, pain and sorrow, will be remedied in the world that is to come. The conception of the Incarnation teaches us to recognize a new and ineffaceable relation between man and man; if Christ took upon Him our human nature every man, white or black, good or bad, saint or sinner, has in him some likeness to Christ and must not be neglected or despised. The conception of the Trinity tells us that subordination is consistent with equality and that it is the glory of the Triune God to be one "by a moral living for and in each other, in a mutual devotion such as serves as an example for men."[4] The conception of the Atonement declares to us the conquest of evil through suffering, tells us of a Christ crucified through weakness but living through the power of God, and shows us the glory of self-sacrifice, the moral beauty of a life given for others. What message has equalled that message during the long years of agony through which the world has passed? The concep-

[4] Mason: *The Faith of the Gospel.*

tion of the Resurrection makes every part of life important; teaching, as it does, the resurrection of the flesh, it impresses on us the sacredness of our bodies as well as of our souls.

So patient investigation will show that no doctrine —if it be rightly maintained—is without a bearing on conduct. False and imperfect doctrines will and must result in lives faulty and maimed which might have been noble and complete. The full Christian doctrine produces a full moral life. If it be translated into action it is an inexhaustible spring of strength. Dogma is necessary because dogma rightly applied is life. The man who believes in God must put his life down upon his faith. "The thing for which the Christian exists is to make it easier for others to believe in God. He exists in order to verify God to his kindred, his neighbors, and to all mankind, to make God's goodness and wisdom manifest, through his life, to his fellow men."

Indeed it is not the preaching of dogma to which men object, it is the exaggerated dogmatic spirit. There is a wide difference between dogma and dogmatism—the one broad, sane, reasonable, insisted on as the only safe foundation of helpful, warm-hearted service; the other narrow and sectarian, often distorting the truth by unduly emphasizing some one principle of the faith at the expense of much else that is equally true and important. It is dogmatism that arouses opposition and dislike—that fashion of presenting doctrine with sledge-hammer blows, or cramming it down men's throats, or insisting upon it

for its own sake with little or no effort to prove its necessity or its usefulness.

This book then is more than a manual of instruction. It is an effort to state Christian truth in a practical and reasonable way. Above everything else, it means always to show, either explicitly or implicitly, that in the full acceptance of Christian truth lie the richest possibilities of life.

The King's Library

II.

WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

THERE is no clear, clean-cut proof of the existence of God. There is, of course, probable proof, moral certainty, but there is no demonstrative proof. Belief in God is a matter of faith, not of intellectual assurance. On the whole, however, most of us are sure of God. Men are naturally predisposed to belief in Him. Instinctively they trust conscience and listen to the voice of the heart. One of the strongest arguments for the existence of God is this instinctive belief of the race that He does exist—we call it the *argumentum consensus gentium* when we wish to appear learned. But this book is for plain, practical people who do not care whether we are scholars or not, so long as we talk common sense. To most men it is unthinkable that there is no God and the fact that they all think alike about it is a strong argument, whether they know what name to give it or not.

Probably the biggest argument against God's existence as a supreme moral governor over a universe He has made is the presence of evil in the world. We cannot understand why, if there is a God, He did not

make the world good and keep it good; or, if that were impossible, why He permits evil to go so long unpunished. How many times, during the Great War, that question went up from men's hearts in passionate protest against evil!

Yet the very thing within me which demands God's intervention and asks that He scourge evil from the earth is proof of the God whose existence and whose goodness I am tempted to doubt. Whence came that mysterious voice of conscience? Where do I get my standards of right and wrong? Does not the moral law, as of necessity, demand a Moral Law Giver? I know, too, that there is an unchangeable law of happiness, a real connection between joy and goodness, between moral misery and sin. How comes it that I cannot be content when I know that I am disregarding the inner voice? Conscience itself cries out that there is a God.

The real strength of the argument for God's existence—the thing which makes us call it moral proof, even if it be not demonstrated certainty—is that it is a converging argument. So many roads all lead to the same place; so many signs all point the same way. Suppose we take some of these converging proofs, one by one, in a plain, practical, common-sense way.

An incident is related of an eminent astronomer which shows how men, in the name of reason, are guilty often of the most irrational conduct. The great scientist had a friend who strenuously denied the existence and power of God. The astronomer had

with much care constructed a concave in miniature, upon which he represented all the planets and stars in their places, together with their evolutions and courses. One day this friend came to see him, and noticing the ingenious piece of work, asked, "Who made that?"

"Who made it?" repeated the astronomer. "Why, nobody; it came by chance."

"Nonsense!" said his friend. "Really, who made it?"

"Nobody," came the reply again. "It came by chance, I tell you."

"Don't be absurd," was now the response, in irritation. "Someone must have made it. Why don't you tell me who it was?"

Then the astronomer, turning to his friend, said: "This poor miniature which I have made to represent what God has created in the universe you say cannot have arisen from an irresponsible cause; and yet you tell me that the wonderful and mighty works around and above us are a mere fortuitous combination of atoms. How do you explain your inconsistency?"

The anecdote will illustrate one of the arguments that convince us of the existence of a supreme Creator and Ruler of the universe. Every effect must have had an adequate cause, and every design must have had a designer. Were I to find a watch, wonderfully calculated to fulfil the evident purpose of its manufacture, it would be absurd for me to suppose, just because I could not *see* the maker of it, that it came into existence by a mere chance, that somehow

the various parts accidentally fell together and fitted into each other with perfect correspondence and by a fortunate coincidence were able to mark the passage of time. Seeing the watch, noticing the evident design in its various parts and observing the precision with which the mechanism does the thing it was manifestly intended to do, I cannot but say: Surely this thing had a maker. It is not by a lucky chance that the parts have come together and can do what I see them doing; someone *designed* it to do this; someone *made* it so that it would accomplish that for which it was designed. In other words, when I see a watch I know that there must have been a watchmaker.

Now, in something the same way, when I look at the world about me, when I see its manifold harmony of design, when I realize how perfectly it fulfils that design, I say again: This also must have had a Maker; some One must have brought it into being; some One must be responsible for all its wonderful perfection of movement, its correspondence of part with part, its harmony of action with action.

If I am impelled to this belief when I think of the universe as a whole, much more am I forced to it when I examine in detail some one of its myriads of marvels. Take, for example, the human eye. Could anything be more exactly fitted to fulfil the function of sight? Think for a moment of the retina, which receives the impressions from without. It is made up of numerous tissues, forming a sort of mosaic, one square inch of which receives twenty million impres-

sions, while sixty million millions of light vibrations enter into it every second of time. Each ray must act upon but one part of the retina; for unless there were some such special arrangement there would be no image formed, any more than the light entering through an open window forms a picture. Think, again, of the functions of the cornea, or of the aqueous and vitreous humors, or notice the external parts of the organ: the eyebrows are sponges which catch the moisture and dust from the forehead; the eyelids are a protection against hostile matter; the lashes are fans, to keep away dirt and insects. And where was the eye made? when? how? It was formed in the maternal womb, long before it could be put to use, wholly separated by solid barriers from the external world. Without those walls was light; within was forming an organ to perceive the light. It is as if in a dark cellar a blind workman should fashion a key to a complicated lock outside. Now consider that the eye is but one of a million wonderful things that go to make up this wonderful world, and you will see why we are compelled to believe that the universe did not come by chance: it was designed and created, and its Creator must be an intelligent Being, of infinite wisdom and power.

Nor must it be supposed that such scientific theories as, for instance, the Darwinian theory of evolution would invalidate this argument. For Darwinism is merely an explanation of *how* things became what they are, not necessarily a denial that there is a God who gave them their origin and made

them capable of progressing from a simple beginning into a richer, fuller harmony and growth.

The word evolution means an "unfolding" and the evolutionary theory tells how different forms of animal and vegetable life have come from other forms already in existence. We are not told, however, anything about the original germ of matter from which these various forms have been evolved. There must have been some bit of protoplasm to begin with and it must have been endued with life or it could not have developed into all its succeeding forms. How, then, did that speck of protoplasm come into being? Whence came the life energy which has since been displayed in the things that have come from it? If God created the original germ and gave it the spark of life, He is the Creator of everything that has sprung out of it, no matter how the process of development was carried on, or what forces have affected succeeding forms of life that are traced back to this original.

Evolutionists themselves will grant this. Herbert Spencer, for example, says that we know nothing of the beginning of the universe and that "the production of matter out of nothing is the real mystery." [1]

Darwin, too, has placed on record in his *Life and Letters* his belief that "the theory of evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God." Asa Gray, the great botanist, spoke of himself as "one who is scientifically, and in his own fashion, a Darwinian; philo-

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[1] *First Principles*, p. 34.

sophically a convinced theist, and religiously an accepter of the creed commonly called the Nicene as the expression of the Christian faith."

Let us take an example to show the reasonableness of this position. We have just used as an illustration of the wonder of God's universe the existence of the human eye. If now it is discovered that this marvellous sight-mechanism was not formed with all its present properties, but was originally a membrane so made that it has developed into an eye, does that make the old argument antiquated and obsolete? Not at all—the wonder seems even greater when we ask, What must He be who could endow a simple membrane with such possibilities of change? Is Paley's old example of design in the watch (which we used above) any the less valid, if we discover that instead of being made at once and coming from the hand of the manufacturer, the watch was but a bit of steel which the maker *endowed with such properties that in time it was bound to grow into a watch?* God, moreover, not merely gave the original impulse, but was active in the work throughout its whole progress —a Creator who works from end to end in His creation and in every step of the onward progress shows His presence in the design and purpose everywhere manifested. Mysteries only multiply if we try to conceive of a Creator who works in this fashion, quietly, slowly, and unseen.

Speaking of the mystery of the Godhead, one is reminded of the argument from the beauty as well as the utility of this world of ours. Beauty, like truth,

is a reality outside of ourselves. It must have its seat somewhere—and the existence of relative beauty here implies perfect beauty in Him who made this earthly splendor. Finite beauty implies infinite beauty; the beautiful landscape, cloud, sunset, face, figure, are but drops in the great ocean of beauty.

Once more, beauty has a strange, mystic power; we cannot explain it, nobody can explain it. And so it prepares us for the profound mysteriousness of God, from whom all beauty comes. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. With God, and the thoughts of God, there is always for us an inherent, unfathomable, spirit-stirring mystery.

If the world that lies about us, in its usefulness and its aesthetic charm, tells us of a Creator of infinite wisdom, boundless power, and deepest mystery, the world that lies *within* us tells of the personal existence and moral grandeur of this infinite Creator. When I look within, at myself, I know that I am a *person,* a being with a separate existence; I am myself and am quite distinct from all that lies outside of this self. Moreover, I am a person who distinguishes between right and wrong; I have an innate sense of goodness; I know that there is righteousness and unrighteousness and I know that I am a free moral being who can choose between them. There is no force upon earth superior to human personality. Because this is so I know that in God must be found something to correspond to personality in myself, or else God is not Almighty; man is greater than He.

To put it briefly, because I am a person I know that God must be a Person as well. He who created cannot be less than the infinite expression of His own creation, and because I am what I am God must be something like me, only in Him the likeness is carried to perfection. Personality in God does not mean that He is a sort of enlarged man, as some people in their crude way seem to think. It means rather, that God is more than mere energy or force; He is a Being who thinks, plans, wills, and acts—a Being who can be known as well as a Presence to be felt.

The personality of God is of the very essence of religion. If He were nothing more than an impersonal energy, I could not pray to Him, I could not obey Him, I could not love Him; we cannot love, obey, pray to that which is only a neuter pronoun—It.

For these reasons, then, I believe in God. I believe He made the world and all that is therein; it must have come from some hand, and I believe it came from His. I believe that He is a Person, because I know that I am, and He is infinitely greater than I. By His Personality I do not necessarily mean exactly what the word means as applied to human beings; I mean that in God there is that which corresponds to personality in men—corresponds to it, but is infinitely greater. I believe also that this Divine Person is a Moral Being, because He gave me my own sense of morality.

I believe in God, and I cannot get away from this belief. The world within and the world without, the

voice of conscience and the voice of nature, tell me that there is one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. I believe, and even though my belief do not rest on absolute proof, I keep on believing because my own heart tells me what other hearts have also learned—I believe in God because I need Him and I cannot do without Him.

III.

THE HOLY TRINITY

MOST people seem to think that when they have learned to believe in the existence of God the Christian doctrine of the Trinity comes as an additional demand on their faith. They regard it as comparatively simple to believe in a Supreme Being, but when they are asked to believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three Divine Persons they regard this as a new burden on an already overburdened creed.

As a matter of fact, however, it is exceedingly difficult for the human reason, in any case, to gain a satisfactory conception of the inner life, the essence of the Godhead; the thought is one beyond the grasp of finite intelligence. We see this the moment we think of any of God's attributes. What can we understand, for example, of His self-existence, a life without source or origin, a great First Cause? Or try to conceive of His eternity, without beginning of days or end of years; or of His omnipotence, a power which is almighty, yet exercised in accordance with definite laws and subject to moral limitations; or of His

omnipresence, by which we mean not simply that His influence is everywhere felt, but that He Himself is in every part of His universe, that all of God, so to speak, is everywhere at one and the same time; or of His omniscience, including in this the thought of God's foreknowledge and man's free will. The idea of God whether as Trinity or Unity is utterly beyond our comprehension.

Yet, while this is true, it may be possible—I am quite sure, indeed, that it *is* possible—to show that belief in God as Three Persons is much easier than acceptance of the Unitarian conception of the deity as a monad. Before we touch upon that, though, it may be well to call attention to some hints in nature, which prepare us for the Trinitarian conception. Not that these could ever have taught us the truth about God, had it not been fully revealed by Christ; but such types and figures will prepare us for the substance and reality, of which they are but shadows.

An illustration of the Trinity, unsatisfactory indeed, but an illustration, nevertheless, is found in the sunbeam. It is absolutely one—we call it a beam of light—and yet in that unity there are three entities, light and heat and actinism. They exist together, yet they are three. They are properties that can be distinguished, yet they are one. All of the sunbeam is light, all is heat, all is chemical action, and yet there are not three sunbeams, but one. Or, consider the human soul. It has three functions, knowing, feeling, willing. We cannot exercise these

functions apart. We cannot know a thing without having some feeling or desire about it, however slight, or without acting, or declining to take action, in accordance with the desire; we cannot act about a thing, without the wish preceding the act; we cannot have the wish without some previous knowledge of the thing. The human soul is absolutely one, and yet it is threefold. Since man is made in the image of God, we need not be surprised when Scripture tells us that something of the same kind, though higher and more mysterious, is true of God.

The mysteries of nature, too, may prepare us for the mystery of God's existence. Here we have on our side so good an authority as the great scientist Huxley himself, who, though he was not a believer in theism or in Christianity, based his position purely on the question of evidence and not on the difficulty of the revelation. On this very subject, in a letter to Bishop (then Canon) Gore, some years ago, he said: "I have not the slightest objection to offer *a priori* [that is, on grounds of reason] to all the propositions of the three creeds of Christendom. The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of Nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is not more puzzling than the necessary antinomies [that is, contradictions] of physical speculation." In other words, as Bishop Gore says in commenting on the letter, a man like Huxley would recognize that human thought may well find itself baffled to *conceive* about what it still must *believe*. As an example, he reminds us of what scientific writers say about the ether

which is the vehicle of heat and light. It is described by physicists as diffused through all space, but though it is everywhere it cannot be discovered anywhere and when its properties are examined it seems to be at once a solid and a fluid. This is mysterious indeed, it passes our limited power of imagination; but nevertheless it appears to be true and is regarded as true by the scientific world.[1]

One who finds it difficult to conceive of a Trinity in Unity might well approach the subject, then, by thinking first of the mysteries of nature and so preparing himself for the mysteries of the faith. Or he might contemplate his own being—how fearfully and wonderfully he is made—lest he grow impatient at understanding so little of the infinite.

It was said just now that it is easier to believe in God as three Persons than as one. Try to think it out, for example, in connection with the very idea of personality. We know that God has what corresponds to though it transcends personality, because He cannot be less than we are, whom He created—and personality is our greatest attribute. Whatever we mean by the personality of God is infinitely higher than what we mean by personality in men, but it is something that must run on similar lines. How, then, could there be the fullest and most complete personality in God if He were a lone and solitary unit, without anything corresponding to personal com-

[1] Gore: *The Incarnation of the Son of God.*

munion and intercourse? Imagine a God, seated alone in desolate grandeur, and then think of the Christian conception of God, in the relation of Father, Son, and Spirit, showing perfection of life, fulness of movement, intercourse, action, reciprocal love, and you will see what we mean by saying that such a God is easier to conceive of than the solitary, cold unit of those who reject Trinitarian teaching. As a matter of fact, Unitarians hesitate at the conception of God prior to the creation of the world, because of these very difficulties.

Or take the thought of God as love. If He is love, there must be something on which He is to expend His love. What or whom did He love, then, before the creation of the world? Was His love infinitely expended upon Himself? We cannot but feel that such a thought is shocking to our best instincts —a monstrous selfishness is the only picture the language suggests. But if, on the other hand, there are different Persons in the Godhead, then one Divine Person may lavish the infinite wealth of His love upon another Divine Person who is infinitely worthy to receive and return it, and we have a picture of God as perfect love, love in Himself, as of the very essence of His being, and apart from any relations with a created world.

Once more, if God is love, how are we to reconcile all that is seemingly hard and harsh and unlovely in the world with His infinite affection? May we not say without contradiction that it is absolutely impossible to make the needed reconciliation except

through belief in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son who was manifested in human life to show in that life just what the Father is? The doctrine of Christ's divinity carries with it, we need hardly explain, the doctrine of the Trinity.

Of course, while all this is true, we could never of ourselves have discovered the doctrine of the Trinity; we are dependent upon revelation and the teaching of the Church for our knowledge of it. As to Scripture, this much may be said, that if the doctrine is not categorically declared there it is necessarily and plainly implied. We find clearly set forth the divinity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit; we have their equality declared; we have them united under the one Name in the baptismal formula. If it remained for the Church to choose the words by which the mysterious fact of their union should be expressed, she was compelled to do so by what she had experienced of the Son and of the Spirit. From the very beginning Christ had been worshipped as God and the formal statement that He was what He had always been accepted to be was a step made necessary by Christian experience. From the beginning the Holy Spirit had also been given divine honor, had been worshipped as on an equality with the Father who sent Him. When the assaults of heresy made some statement of the facts necessary, the Church was but declaring in careful language what had long been accepted in thought. Indeed, it is necessary to bear in mind always that the Church never set forth the doctrine of the Trinity merely as a shibboleth by

which to exclude all who could not use the test word aright. She found, rather, men denying what she held most sacred, refusing to accept what had been instinctively believed, and she was forced to define in order to clarify her own faith.

Abstruse as all this may sound, it will not be wasted time to try to think it out. It will be good for us to realize how little we are, when we come to place ourselves in contemplation of what is infinite and eternal. The humbling process will be the best possible exercise of devotion. Do you assure me that it would be far wiser to devote our energy to the promotion of practical religion? "Practical religion! Ah, how we cheat ourselves with phrases," says the late Dr. Huntington. "Show me the man whose soul is full of heavenly imaginings, who dwells largely among things not seen, whose thoughts often take flight from the edges of this buying and selling world, that they may strike out into the pure air and find rest upon the wing as the seabirds do, and I will show you one who will make the best of neighbors, the most public-spirited of citizens, the gentlest, kindest, truest, least arrogant of men. For, after all, the great thing in 'practical religion' is to sink self; and in this task we succeed best at moments when most we realize the littleness of man, the majesty of the Almighty."

Surely, thought about the Trinity is of importance, then, in the religious life. It becomes of the greater value when we realize that this conception of

God is the only conception which shows Him to us as eternally productive, all sufficient within Himself, always and in His very essence a God of love; that it helps us both to think about Him and to worship Him with intelligence and enables us to recognize that human life can be in His image only by becoming continually more operative, more fruitful, more social.

The Trinitarian may well challenge his Unitarian friends to a comparison of the two beliefs. As he knows already that the Church's doctrine is scriptural he will find added confidence in the assurance that it is more reasonable and, best of all, of more practical value as an incentive to unselfish living.

IV.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

IT would be very interesting if we could print here just what everybody we know thinks about Christ. It was the question our Lord Himself asked, "What think ye of Christ?" "Whom say ye that I am?"

There are many people who do not understand how He can be both God and man and therefore flatly deny His divinity. If you were to ask these people just exactly what they do believe about Him, you would find, when they tried to put their thought into some positive form, that it was not positive at all, that their answers would be most vague and uncertain. They will not accept the doctrine that Christ is divine, but they will not be at pains to discover precisely what they do think He is. Probably, if you were to pin them down to some definite answer, most of them would say that they think He was a good man, the best man the world has ever seen. Some would go further, and tell you that He was divine in the same sense in which all men are, though in greater degree; that is, that God absolutely possessed and filled His whole life. But He is not

God, they will add; no, Christ was a good man, the best, the purest, the holiest, the most unselfish man that ever trod this earth, but He was not God incarnate.

Well, let us see. Suppose some religious teacher were to stand before us and declare himself sent by God to lead us to a fuller knowledge of His divine character. Suppose he were to begin his work by saying that we are all of earthly origin, while he was from above. Suppose he were to summon us to do him reverence. Suppose he were to tell us that he was the way, the truth, the life, the light of the world, the good shepherd of souls. Suppose he were to repeat this in every conceivable form, were to tell us that we must honor him as we honor God, that we cannot come to God except through him, that he and God were one, that if we believe in God we must believe also in him, that if we do not love him it will show that we do not love God.

What would you say of such a man? You could not call him good. You would declare him either a lunatic or an imposter. No religious teacher to-day would dare point men to himself; none could have any influence if he were not willing to acknowledge his own imperfections. A religious teacher may say, "I try," "I think," "I feel sure," "I hope," "I believe"; but he must never say, "I am." A sane man who spoke of himself as never committing sin would be consigned at once to oblivion and contempt.

Now, bearing all this in mind, notice our Lord's self-assertion, His silence as to any moral defect, His

intense authoritativeness, His claim of co-equality with the Father, His assertion that He is essentially one with God, His call to men to make Him an object of faith just as they believe in God, to trust in Him as they trust in God, to honor Him as they honor God, and to love Him because to do so is a necessary mark of the children of God. See how He declares that no rival claim however strong, no natural affection however deep, may interpose between Him and the soul of His follower. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." See how He asserts His absolute sinlessness, challenging men to find any spot in Him. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Read scores of passages where Christ makes such claims and then ask if He can be sincere, unselfish, humble, and good, if He is not more than man. As St. Augustine put it, "Christ, if He is not God, is not a good man."

Consider, too, that these divine claims of Jesus are what brought about His death. Why was He crucified? Nicodemus was not simply speaking for himself, he probably expressed the sentiment of many of his co-religionists, when he said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God." But just because Jesus was not content with that admission, because He claimed to be more than a divinely commissioned teacher and asserted His equality with the Father, He was taken to judgment and to death. He was crucified on the charge of blasphemy, because He made Himself equal with God. Was He, then, in

making this claim, an ignorant, half-crazed fanatic? Either that; or else He was a thoroughly unprincipled man; or else He was what He claimed to be, He was God.

Does one find it hard to believe that Christ is God in the flesh? Well, it is harder to believe that He is truly a good man if He is anything less than this. "It is easier," says Dr. Liddon,[1] "for a good man to believe that in a world where he is encompassed by mysteries, where his own being itself is a consummate mystery, the Moral Author of the wonders around him should for great moral purposes have taken to Himself a created form, than that the one Human Life which realizes the idea of humanity, the one Man who is at once perfect strength and perfect tenderness, the one Pattern of our race in whom its virtues are combined, and from whom its vices are eliminated, should have been guilty, when speaking about Himself, of an arrogance, of a self-seeking, of an insincerity, which if admitted must justly degrade Him far below the moral level of millions among His unhonored worshippers. Thus our Lord's human glory fades before our eyes when we attempt to conceive of it apart from the truth of His divinity. He is only perfect as Man, because He is truly God. If He is not God, He is not an humble or an unselfish man."

Or think, once more, of Christ's claim to judge the world. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath

[1] *The Divinity of Our Lord,* lecture iv.

committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." We know what it means to sit in judgment over one of our fellows. It means, if we are to give a perfect judgment, that we must know his whole life, read every thought, consider every word, be acquainted with every act. It means that we must be able to read his heart like an open book, that we must have thorough understanding of all his motives; for motives as well as actions must be taken under consideration. It means that we must have perfect knowledge of all his past, his inherited tendencies, his early environment, his peculiar temptations, the strength of his resistance of them. We must be able to look into his eyes, and read him through and through.

Consider, therefore, what Christ claims when He asserts that to Him it is given to know in this way not one man but all men, not one soul but every soul that ever faced sin, every man, woman, or child who is now on earth, or ever came into the world, or is yet to be born, to live and work and love and pray and struggle here. To make such a claim is to declare one's self omniscient, and to assert one's omniscience is to call one's self God. Christ did make this claim and we come back again, therefore, to the same dilemma: if He was not insane or deluded, He was either the incarnation of wickedness, or He was good. If He was good He was also God, as He claimed to be.

In all this, let it be noted, we are but touching the border ground of the proof of Christ's divinity. We have to remember not only what He said about Himself, but what others said of Him. Those men who companied with Him for the few years of His ministry came to think of Him and speak of Him in ways that are consistent only with the most thorough-going belief in His deity. What, for example, did St. Thomas mean, when he fell at His feet and cried, "My Lord and my God"? What did St. Paul mean, when he said, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? What did he mean, again, when he said of Christ that "being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"? What did the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews mean, when he called our Lord Christ "the brightness" of the Father's "glory", and "the express image of His Person"? What did St. John mean, when he called Him the Word of God, and said that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"? What must this same St. John have believed, when, his soul thrilling at the thought of the wonderful thing that had come into his life, he used such language as this of his Master? Read it: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of

life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

What did they mean, and what did they believe? What but that Jesus our Lord was in truth the divine Son of the Father? And what can we believe but just what they did? What think you of Christ? Do the Gospels give us a substantially accurate account of His life? And did His disciples know Him? And was He a good man? And if so, was He not also God?

Jesus Christ is indeed the revelation of the Father; we really know God only as He is manifest in the Son. Apart from Christ, God is as it were but a dim idea, a vague conception, and our hearts cry out for further knowledge: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." In Christ, and through Him, God becomes an intense reality: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

V.

THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD

IN the Nicene Creed we say that we "believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

What we have just seen about our Lord's divine self-consciousness forces us to a conviction of this truth. So it was with the early disciples. They went about with Jesus while He lived on earth, and they found Him to be perfect man in everything that pertains to human nature. Then gradually, as they saw the daily miracle of His life and listened to His wonderful words and saw His marvellous works, they came to the conviction that He was also perfect God; and this belief, but half formed at His death, was confirmed in His resurrection, through which He was seen as Lord of life and victor over the grave and was "declared to be the Son of God with power".

The apostles did not reason out the Incarnation from the Godhead downward; they reached it by a natural ascent from the manhood upward. They

saw that nothing less than this truth could explain all that they had learned, as their eyes gazed upon and their hands handled the Word of Life. St. John's Gospel, which was written to give the record of the apostles' faith, traces the growth of this conviction, and closes (for the last chapter is supplementary) with the cry of St. Thomas, kneeling in penitence and adoring faith at the feet of his Master, "My Lord and my God." Christ's first disciples "came to believe in His Godhead through their experience of His manhood; and, coming so to believe, they handed on their faith as an inheritance to the Christian Church, an inheritance which the record of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, and the perpetual experience of His power in those who believe, has made continually more credible." [1]

Christianity is the religion of the Incarnation. And yet, strangely enough, thousands of those who profess and call themselves Christians have the vaguest possible notion of what the Incarnation means. Let us try to state the doctrine. Briefly, it tells us that according to the Christian faith Jesus Christ is both God and Man, perfect God and perfect Man (that is, having every essential element of both natures), but that while He has two distinct and perfect natures He is one divine Person. A simple illustration will help to a clear understanding of this central truth of the Christian religion.

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[1] Gore: *The Creed of the Christian.*

Suppose that a man, for love of some of the creatures beneath him, were permitted to become one of them. Suppose, for instance, that a man had devoted his life to the care of birds, and saw that through some great mistake in their mode of life they were fast dying off. Suppose now (though, of course, it is humanly impossible) that he could become a bird, so as to teach birds how to live. He would have to enter into their nature through the ordinary laws by which their life begins; yet he would retain his human personality; and, having become one of them, he would still be able to see all things from a human point of view. With his man's mind he could see their mistakes. Through the nature which he held in common with them he could teach them the remedy. But he had lived long before he became one of them, and he still remained what he was before, only taking up their nature that he might help and teach them and come closer to them than before.

So Jesus Christ is God. He had lived from all eternity, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. At the Incarnation He entered through the womb of Mary into man's nature. He saw man mistaking the meaning of life, living for pleasure or sin, and He said, I, the Son of God, will enter into man's nature; with My divine mind I will see his faults and the remedy; through the nature which I assume I will be able to show him this remedy.

If this is true, then it is also true that when Jesus Christ does anything, or says anything, it is God who is speaking or acting. Not that there are

two persons in the two natures, God the Son and the man Jesus; it is the one Person, the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, and He is merely translating the life of God into our ways of thinking and acting. When an infant is born, a new person comes into the world; but when Jesus Christ was born, no new person entered into life. It was the same Divine Person who had lived from all eternity with the Father, and now took a new nature unto Himself and lived in that nature, manifesting in it the divine truth and beauty that were His before, making God as it were visible to men, and living His new life, our human life, as He would have us live it. No man had seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, came and declared Him—made Him known.

Faith in the incarnation of the Son of God is in no way dependent upon the virgin birth of our Lord. We learn that Jesus is the Son of God exactly as the first disciples discovered it, by living with Him long enough and closely enough to see that the real miracle is the continuous miracle of His life. That is the method of approach by which, in the last chapter, we came to the fact of His divinity. Once we have arrived at a knowledge of who and what Jesus Christ was, belief in His miraculous birth falls into place as a secondary miracle. We believe in the unique birth because we believe in the unique Person. In other words, if Jesus Christ really is divine, if at His birth an Eternal and Divine Personality entered upon a

new mode of existence and manifested Himself in human form, then it would hardly be strange or unreasonable that His birth should be unlike other births. The fact of Jesus Himself is so unique and miraculous that we may rightly expect the method of His entrance into the earthly life to be unique and miraculous also. Face to face with a life that cannot be explained save as the unveiling of the Deity, we ask how it would be possible for the Eternal Son to clothe Himself in human flesh after the ordinary manner of human conception. Here is something which has no equal or likeness in the annals of earth. It is not the case of a new man coming into life, but of the Creator of all things manifesting Himself in that life. If miracle is ever in place as a witness to the intervention of a new power, the coming of the Son of Man into our earthly life was surely a fit occasion for miracle.[2]

It is this, then, that we believe about Christ. It is our conviction that He cannot be explained in human terms alone. He is something more than the highest product of humanity. He is the God-Man.

In so revealing God and man, the Eternal Son shows us some things which, apart from a belief in the Incarnation, it would be exceedingly difficult for us to realize. He shows us what God is; He shows us also what man should be. He shows us, for example, God's love, God's personality, God's presence with us;

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[2] See my book, *The Experiment of Faith*, page 107, etc.

He shows us, by living in it perfectly, the essential nobility of man's nature. Let us reserve the fact of the unveiling of Deity for subsequent chapters and consider now the other thought: The Incarnation tells us of the inherent worth of our humanity. Were our nature wholly bad, God the Son could not have taken it to Himself; since He did so take it, He has purified it, sanctified it, lifted it up into His own divine life.

Remember now that Christ is one Person, God the Son, in two natures, that of God and that of man. Among the early heretics was one named Nestorius, who did not believe this. His explanation was something like this—and it is especially interesting as expressing clearly what many people, in a vague way, think now. He maintained that Mary really "gave birth to something which was human first and afterwards was taken into 'conjunction' with the Eternal Word"; that the Son of Mary was human; at His birth, or perhaps not until His baptism, the Word, the Son of God, made Him the special receptacle of deity. There were really two persons in Christ, the man who was born of a human mother, and God who had entered into such close union with this man that he was filled with the divine energy and was even able to "rank as God".

This doctrine was condemned by the Church. We can readily see why. For it really does away with the Incarnation. If God simply came down into the man Christ, then He took upon Himself not all humanity but simply one bit of humanity; He did

not Himself *become man,* He simply inspired and glorified *one man* by manifesting Himself through him. If Nestorius was right, then the Gospel is the story of the exaltation of just one of God's creatures. If the Church's doctrine of the Incarnation is accepted, then God really became flesh and dwelt among us, tabernacled in humanity, not in a man. If that is true, all mankind was exalted in Christ, not one single person; all mankind was lifted up into the Godhead, potentially at least; all mankind was sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy One of God. We know, in that case, that there is something about our human nature so splendid that God can really enter into that nature and live in it without ceasing to be God; and since humanity is essentially so glorious a thing we know that it can be lifted up in Christ back to what God intended it to be.

The truth of the Incarnation, therefore, is not a mere dead bit of metaphysics. Surely not—it is a fact of practical importance; a dogma, but a dogma which like every other doctrine of the Christian creed influences our conception of life. If we believe in the Incarnation—in a real incarnation, not such a mystical conjunction as Nestorius taught—we believe that Christ sums up all humanity in Himself. He is to us in something of the relation in which a composite photograph stands to the pictures that formed it. Christ has in Him all of mankind. He is man, rather than a man, and in Him are united all the members of the human race; you are there and so am I; indeed, there is no one who ever has lived or

ever will live in whom there is not something which goes to contribute to the universal character of Him who is the Son of Man.

And if this is so—if Christ is the sum of all humanity, if we find in Him something in common with every human being who has ever walked this earth—then every human being, however poor or degraded, however fallen in wickedness, has within him a germ, a seed, which if it can be developed is capable of a new life and a glorious resurrection. The fact of the Incarnation teaches us to recognize a new and ineffaceable relation between man and man. If our Lord took upon Him humanity, He took upon Him all types; and every man, white or black, high or low, practised in holiness or defiled by sin, the saint of the cloister and the outcast of the street, the Christian and the heathen—every man has in him some likeness to Christ. If the Christ-life can be applied to him he may be made anew after Christ's perfect likeness. None may be forgotten or despised. The Hebrew would not step on a piece of paper, lest it should have written on it the Name of God, and we cannot look down upon God's lowest creature, because on him is stamped, however faintly, the image of the Lord Christ.

It has been beautifully said, "There is hardly a roadside pond or pool which has not as much landscape in it as above it. It is not the dull, brown, muddy thing we suppose it to be. It has a heart like ourselves, and in the bottom of that, there are the boughs of the tall trees, and the blades of the shaking

grass, and all manner of hues of variable pleasant light out of the sky. Nay, that ugly gutter which stagnates over the drain bars in the heart of the great city is not altogether base. Down in that, if you will look deep enough, you may see the dark, serious blue of the far-off sky, and the passing of the pure clouds. It is at your own will that you see in that despised stream the refuse of the streets, or the image of the sky." What is true here is true of man as well. Jesus Christ is our pledge of that. He came to seek and to save those who were lost, and He saves them by coming into their nature, that this nature may be brought into touch with His. So long as breath remains to them, so long as He is reflected ever so faintly in them, we may have hope. No one else can see into the depths of their hearts as Christ can, and till He has given them up we must never despair.

VI.

THE INCARNATION AND GOD'S LOVE

JESUS CHRIST shows us what man may be. He also shows us what God is. It is good in these days to be sure of what God really is. The last four years have been years that try men's souls. Sin and sorrow, suffering and death, have been seen in sharper outline than ever before. Is it any wonder that men ask whether a world like this can be God's handiwork? What kind of a God is He whose universe is seamed and scarred with war and all its hideous and horrible frightfulness? Yes, we want to know, with absolute certainty, about God. Is He a God of love?

The troubled questionings which rose in men's hearts when war brought forth such a multitude of sorrows are the same old problems which the world has always faced; only now they come to us more sharply and painfully pressing. Often before men and women have been troubled and have doubted God's love. In the presence of some great personal sorrow or frightful public calamity, or contemplating the sin and evil that lie all about us, it must be that sometimes faith will falter, if it does not fail. With

the world full of suffering and sorrow it is not surprising that belief in the existence of a good and loving God should sometimes waver. Even the most thoughtful and religious must feel in the presence of such a mystery a call to sound the depths of their convictions and ask upon what solid basis their religious belief rests.

I called not long ago on a friend who only a year before had married a sweet and lovely young woman, of whom we were all very fond. They had just those few months of happiness, and then the wife died, and with her their newborn baby. I call to mind now another case of most pitiful bereavement. A widowed mother was left to care for two little ones; for years she strained every effort to give them the privileges and advantages that would fit them for life. She had worked all those years, with the constant hope before her that they would some day be a comfort and help to her, would some day, when life opened more brightly for them, bless her for all the loving sacrifice of those years. The boy had just finished his school life and had secured a fine business position and the girl was just growing into years of young womanhood, when disease carried both away, and the mother was left desolate. Indeed it is true that the problems the war thrust upon us were old problems. The difficulty of faith is not increased when instances of such sorrow are multiplied a million times. It is just as great a problem, if one mother lose her baby.

What could one say of God's love, to these broken-hearted mourners? What would any man *dare* say,

if it were not for all that the life of the Man of Sorrows shows us? There are many possible explanations of the meaning of suffering and sorrow, but none of these explanations really satisfies the troubled soul. The great clue to the problem is a steadfast faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. If we have not such a faith, we are all at sea. Those who do possess it need to realize its power in solving the difficulties of life, that they may make others feel its steadying influence.

If Christ is the Eternal Son of the Father, there can be no question about the love of God. There may be many things in the world that seem to contradict that love, but though we are mystified in the presence of all this evil we are not at an utter loss. We know that God is love, because we know that Jesus Christ is love—and Christ is God. His life is the perfection of love—no one can deny that. If He were merely a man, the fact would mean nothing to us; we should have but another instance of a surpassingly good man —one more noble, loving heart—struggling against evil and apparently deserted by God, conquered in the end. If, however, Christ is more than man, if He is God Incarnate; if He came on earth to restore sinful, suffering, sorrowing humanity into harmony with the divine plan; if, moreover, He came, not of Himself alone, but His loving purpose had its origin also in the Father's will; in other words, if "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son"—then we may hold our faith firm, no matter what dreadful calamity or heart-breaking personal sorrow attacks it. We may not understand why God permits the exist-

ence of pain and evil and sorrow—we may not understand, but we know; we know that God is love, because we know that Jesus Christ is love, and Christ is God. God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, once walked this earth; and no man can look at Christ and doubt His infinite affection. Did He love men? See Him as the leper pleads to be healed. "And Jesus stretched forth His hand and touched him"—*touched* the man who had not felt the warmth and pressure of a human hand since his loathsome disease came upon him—"touched him, and said, I will; be thou clean." Did Christ love men? See Him on the cross, praying for His murderers; see Him, dying that He might redeem us. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Who can contemplate the cross and remain unmoved? Who, as he draws near to Calvary, is not hushed into silence? The offering lifted up there is the supreme exhibition of love, in its length and breadth and depth and height so great that it "passeth knowledge".

Let me repeat, however, at the risk of being tedious, that all this would prove nothing, were Christ but a man. We see around us now men who love their fellows; would it prove more to be told that this was a man who loved them to perfection? If He is God—then when we see how He loved us we begin to see how God loves us and whatever of ill

we are called upon to bear we can continue in patience to trust in His goodness. There is God Incarnate, we say, and in His presence we believe and are sure. Whether all things can be explained or not, we know in whom we have believed. Our God is the God who once entered into the tragedy of human life to show that He understands and sympathizes.

Look at it again from another point of view. The thought of Christ's divinity assures us also of the Father's affection for us; for it teaches us to see how "God commendeth His love toward us, in that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Had God sent a man into the world, a good man who lived a righteous life and died a self-sacrificing death, and then had God accepted this sacrifice as a ransom for other men, it would hardly have showed God as just, much less loving; but if God Himself came to save us, if He gave His own Son —there was love indeed, love on the part of the Son, and love also on the part of the Father! A pious English cottager, on hearing the text, "God so loved the world," exclaimed, "Ah! that *was* love. I could have given myself, but I could never have given my son." Since then many *have* given their dearest and best in France and Flanders, in supreme sacrifice.

Surely it must make them understand better the Father's part in the sacrifice of Calvary.

So the fact of the Incarnation gives us the best clue that can be found in solving the mysteries of sin and sorrow. The great secret of the Church is that this world, however much of the strain and stress of pain and terror there may be about it, is indeed ruled by Almighty Love. That is the fact of which the doctrine is only the abstract expression; that is the great fact which men are doubting when they doubt this doctrine; that is the great fact which the Bible puts for us beyond all question, not simply by naming the doctrine, but by telling us the story of the Christ who came down from heaven that we might have life.

It seems almost too good to be true, does it not? In reality it is too great and splendid not to be true. There is a poem of Browning in which Karshish, the Arab physician, writes a letter to his friend Ahib to tell of meeting Lazarus of Bethany and of the latter's belief that the One who raised him from the grave Himself was God. Karshish plays about the thought with a strange fascination; he cannot dismiss it from his mind. Suppose it were true! "The very God! Think, Ahib!" he writes. "So the All-Great were the All-Loving too."

Surely, were the story of Jesus Christ better known the real message of His life would be apparent. God is not a God of lonely majesty and self sufficiency. Once He came visibly among men to show them what He really is. The man who has seen Jesus

has seen God and has learned the secret of all secrets, that God is love. The Christian believer walks through a world of sorrow with peace in his soul.[1] Years ago Browning, in another wonderful poem, made David tell Saul of a God such as the Christian worships:

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! My flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it! O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand.

[1] See my *Back to Christ*, chapter ii.

VII.

THE INCARNATION AND GOD'S PERSONALITY

THERE are very few men who have not some realization, more or less intense, of the existence of a Supreme Power bearing some sort of relation to the world. They may never have heard of Herbert Spencer, but they would agree with him, if they had heard of him, when he tells us, as the result of his philosophic study of the subject, that "it is absolutely certain that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Man is born, almost, with this idea pressing upon him; he cannot escape it. No matter how skeptical he may be, no matter how careless his life, no matter how little he may think it possible to know about God—if there be a God—this one simple conviction he cannot escape, that somewhere in the universe, whether it be a power unknowable, a blind force, an impersonal activity, whatever it may be, somewhere there is an infinite and eternal energy, an energy from which all creation has sprung. Sometimes, as he pauses in the hurry and bustle of a careless life, this thought will be borne in upon him with special

force, burdening and oppressing him with its awful presence. Whatever he may believe or disbelieve, when he gets by himself, in the loneliness of his own room or out under the stillness of the midnight sky, back will come this instinct that he is not really alone, that some power holds him in its grasp, some energy is pushing him on, somewhere and somehow there is a force above him which he can never get away from, that envelops him and seizes him and in some mysterious way controls his life.

It will be seen at once that such a belief as this really is either no knowledge of God at all, or no such knowledge of Him as man, if he has a spark of what we call religion, needs and must long for; yet it seems sometimes as if it were pretty much as far as some people have ever gone in their thinking about heavenly things. Their main idea of God is this thought of some eternal power, in the presence of which they feel a momentary awe and oppression. They fear God, when they stop to think of Him, much as a child fears the darkness or the thunder.

Now religion is the worship and service of a Supreme Being, and therefore for religion to have any hold on men it is necessary that they should think about God, primarily, not as a Power but as a Person. We cannot really offer God an act of worship, we cannot give Him any genuine service, we cannot pray to Him, unless we have a deep and certain realization of His personal being. This is just what we find so hard to get, just what men have always found hard to gain. All that we know of personality we know

through men and women whom we have seen and with whom we have had direct intercourse. How then can we ever realize the personality of God—whom we have not seen, whom no man can see? Again and again there comes over us the awful sense of His presence; again and again we feel our own moral responsibility and begin to realize that there must be some One who sees and judges; again and again we tell ourselves that God must be more than an ever-present impersonal force, that He must be a Being who in some way acts as do the finite beings who are made in His image; but it is all a hard and painful struggle against heavy odds. "Shew us the Father," we say, in the words of St. Philip; "shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." If we could have but one glimpse of God; if we could but have some vision that would assure us that He is a Person who knows us and with whom we may have communion and fellowship; if we could but rise out of this ignorance of His manner of life and think of Him as something more than energy, infinite and eternal though it be! "Shew us the Father." Let us see Him; let us know Him personally, after the same fashion in which we know our earthly friends. Then everything will be easy, then faith will never fail, then we shall be able to pray with earnestness, then we can give ourselves to His service, then we can yield Him personal devotion and pay Him homage and worship.

As we long thus for this deeper knowledge of God, our Lord Christ comes to us, Christ the Incar-

nate Son, and says, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Ah! There is the answer to all our craving. Here is God. He that hath seen Christ hath seen God. The Word, the Son of God, the express image, the stamped copy of His Person, became flesh and dwelt among us and from that moment it has been easier to know God, easier to realize His eternal personal being, easier to come to Him and find in Him a Friend and a Father. All along we have been grasping up after the Infinite and have failed to hold it fast; now the Infinite has stooped to our finite level, and we may know God as we know one another.

How plain it is! All through their long training with the Lord Christ the disciples were being prepared for this. They were not let at once into the secret of His divinity; but they were brought to know Him, allowed to meet with Him, day by day grew to be on more intimate terms with Him; in His words and deeds they saw the brightness of God's glory, and as they learned to know Christ they felt themselves gradually understanding more of God, they felt a new life within them, they saw by a new light. Then one day, when they had reached the height of personal intimacy with the Master, He said to them, "I and My Father are One. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Now that you know Me, He seemed to mean, you know God. You have longed to draw near to Him, and to see Him in the very essence of His being. Now you may; for you

have seen and known Me, and when you see Me you see My Father also, you see God.

How plain it was; how simple, even when He had gone away, had left earth for Heaven! They had seen God, had talked with Him and lived with Him: that was what those three years of discipleship with Christ meant. They had seen and heard and handled the Word of Life; they beheld His glory shining out in His human life and henceforth they could never forget. Back they went in memory to all their life with Him, to the days when they had questioned Him about their perplexities, when they had carried their troubles to Him, when they had asked Him of this thing and that, when they had knelt at His feet and offered Him their reverent service. Now they saw that they had been doing all that with God—God whom they had longed to see and know.

And how plain it is for us now! As we read the Gospels we find there the picture of a Person who once walked this earth of ours, with whom men once talked, whom they knew as a Friend and loved as a Brother. As we read we begin to know and love Him too. By and by we see that this was no mere man, that He was and is God, our God forever and ever. Seeing that, we see that God is a Person such as was this Man of Galilee, a Being whom we may know, love, honor, and worship, to whom we may pray with the certainty that He hears and answers—no blind force or power, but in some way One like ourselves, only infinitely more than we are.

There have been times, perhaps, when we were not able to realize that personality; times when we felt only the dull weight of a presence that oppressed us but gave us no peace, no comfort, no joy; times when we could not be certain that God knew, or listened, or would help. But now we go back to our Bible; and, reading it in the light of this Incarnation that has become so plain, we have our thought of God transformed; we believe, and feel that we can doubt no more, for we know that this is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

VIII.

THE INCARNATION AND GOD'S PRESENCE

THERE are two ways of thinking about God. We may think of His immanence or of His transcendence. By the immanence of God we mean His presence and activity in every part of His creation. The motion of the planet in its orbit and the dropping of a leaf in the breeze of summer alike display His power. By God's transcendence, on the other hand, we mean His position without and beyond nature; we think of Him as dwelling above the world, guiding and directing its movements.

It is this latter thought which we more frequently associate with God's personality. When we think of His immanence we are apt to rest in the idea of energy, force, power universally excited; we think of a divine presence, but we are likely to have a very indefinite conception of that presence, corresponding to the vague feeling of awe that oppresses us as we contemplate nature in her more solemn moods. In order to have the conception of God's personality, we must add to the thought of His immanence the idea of His transcendence. He is not only *within* nature,

filling it with life and energy, but He is *above* nature, as a personal Superintendent, if we may so speak, directing its workings.

But just here comes the difficulty. As we grasp this latter idea more fully, instinctively we put God away from us. We think of Him as a Being far-off, in other regions than those we inhabit. We forget that God can never leave His world, that He cannot be banished from His creation, that He cannot have made the world and started it going and then left it to its own operation, with once in a while a special intervention on His part. We are so apt to get that notion of an absentee God against which a modern writer so vehemently protests, "the conception of a God sitting in the centre of the universe ruling things, as an imperial Cæsar sits in Rome."

The thought, perhaps, may not be altogether clear; so suppose, in order to appreciate it, we put a question to ourselves. As a matter of fact, how are we accustomed to think about God? We feel His personal existence, let us hope, very deeply; but how do we think of this personal Being? Do we think of Him oftenest as being with us, at our side, looking into our faces, or do we think of Him as being far away, entirely out of our reach? Is it not a fact that from childhood we have been putting Him ever at a distance; kneeling to pray to Him, and yet somehow feeling that we must strive hard to make Him hear; picturing Him in heaven, "above the bright blue sky," as the children's hymn puts it, One who hears, and yet somehow—we cannot explain it, but somehow—

almost out of the sound of our voices, almost out of reach? We pray, and it seems necessary to lift the eyes and stretch out the hands and strain after God. Yes, we know that He is a person, but He seems always to be a distant person; He seems never to be here, He is always there, just beyond us, not with us, never leaning over us as the mother did at whose knee we bent in childhood, with her hand on the little one's head, and her face over him. This is the way we long to think about God; we want to have a deeper sense of His nearness, we wish to realize His personal presence.

Now a moment's thought will convince us that devout meditation on the Incarnation can satisfy this longing for God. See how it was with the early disciples. We are not to suppose that from the moment they saw Christ they understood His divine nature. At first He was to them only a very good man. We ourselves come into the presence of a man or woman of saintly character and at once we seem to be breathing a different air, there is a subtle something in the conversation and bearing of our friend that rests like a benediction upon us and God seems nearer. So it was that the disciples first knew Christ, we may suppose. Not without reason do the painters picture Him with a halo about His head and a glory shining from His person. It was so, in a figure, that the disciples saw Him from that first day when the Baptist pointed Him out to Andrew and John at the riverside.

Then, as their intimacy with Him deepened, they

began to know Him as the Messiah and remembering all that had been told by the prophets of how God's grace should be poured on the Anointed One they learned to think of Him as indeed bringing the Almighty very close to them. Yet later they knew Him as in some special sense the Son of God and the significance of the title grew upon them as He spoke to them from time to time of His union with the Father, of His equality with Him and of the necessity of a personal union with Himself in order to be knit up into the divine life. What it all meant they did not fully understand then, but as time went on He spoke more and more plainly and then, after the resurrection, they saw the meaning of His life, saw that in the presence of their Master they were in the very presence of God.

So their faith grew. Mark how its gradual development prepared them to realize at the last God's presence with them in Christ. They could not have understood or believed it at the first, but after all this training the truth came home to them now. They saw that when they had been speaking with Christ; when they had reverently touched His hand, when they had knelt at His feet, when they had told Him of their joys and sorrows, or asked His help, or offered Him their love, they had been walking and talking with God. That was why their hearts burned within them: they were in the divine presence, following God as His dear children. Once they had known Christ after the flesh, but now they knew Him so no more. They had gradually come to the revelation and

so they could grasp it. They looked back upon the old life and realized its secret and knew now why the Master was to be called Emmanuel; truly, in a way far higher than they had dreamed, He was *God with us.*

We note how this sense of the presence of God with them was deepened by the resurrection appearances. There seems to have been a plan followed in Christ's way of manifesting Himself. The disciples had been with Him and had known His presence in the flesh so long, that it was necessary that they should be prepared for the different presence that was to be vouchsafed them after the ascension. Before, they had known that He was with them because they had seen Him with their eyes and handled Him with their hands. Sometimes they were still given the opportunity to do that—for they must be assured of His bodily resurrection—but now He always came and went so mysteriously. One moment they were alone in the upper chamber and the next He came and stood in the midst. Again, they were fishing by the Sea of Galilee and they looked up to find Him standing on the shore. The disciples on the road to Emmaus met Him and then just as they recognized Him He vanished. Was it not so, that the lesson might gradually be learned, the lesson we need to learn ourselves, that He was always with them, in their work, in their worship, at the social board; always with them, but unveiling His presence only now and then? Later came the ascension, when a

cloud received Him out of their sight; but they knew, after all that training, that He had not gone away; He was still present, though thereafter the veil was not to be lifted for them. All the Easter appearances had been given to make them understand this, that He was ever by their side, and had only to part the cloud and reveal Himself when He would. Now and then the veil was lifted, for St. Stephen, for St. Paul; but for the most part there were to be no more visions; indeed, they were so sure now of His presence that visions were no longer needed; they knew, though they could not see.

Christ is with us; and Christ is God, therefore God is with us. That is what the Incarnation meant in the apostolic days, and that is what it means now. If we do not feel it; if as we gather together for worship in His name there is no deepened sense of the nearness of Christ and the Father; if there has been no catching of the breath, no glow at the heart, no reverent awe, no sacred sense of mystery, then we must turn back and seek to quicken our faith. What do we really believe about Christ? Are we sure that He is divine? If so, what He did of old He does now. If we pray to have our faith strengthened we too shall see and know and for us too God will come and speak and help and strengthen.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet.

IX.

SIN AND THE FALL

THE existence of sin and evil in the world is possibly the greatest mystery we are called upon to face, and yet, when we come to think of it, the idea of a world of men and women altogether good and true, without the possibility of evil as a thing they had deliberately rejected, would be a much more difficult conception. For moral goodness implies virtue that comes from *choice*.

Sometimes we hear people say that God might have made us good, and kept us good, that He might have created us so that there would be no possibility of our doing what is wrong. Could He have done that? We can hardly see how. For then we should not be men and women at all; we should be mere machines and our goodness would be like the "goodness" of a perfectly constructed watch or a delicately adjusted engine; it would have no moral element about it whatever, it would be mere mechanical goodness. Instead of our being free agents, serving God because we would show Him a loving and grateful obedience, we should be wooden puppets, always

moving in the right direction, but doing so because we were put here or there and caused to do this or that, at the touch of a hand that moved the springs and wires.

Take two boys who have been brought up in different ways by equally virtuous and conscientious parents. Suppose that one of them has been so carefully guarded from sin that he has not been allowed to think things out for himself. His father has always told him just exactly what to read, what to see, what to speak, whom to meet, what to do. In the effort to prevent the boy from doing wrong he has kept away from him all knowledge of any but his own views and the son has grown up, therefore, in innocence. But he is not necessarily, on that account, a good man. His virtue is the virtue of ignorance. He does what his father has taught him, because there has never entered into his mind a conception of anything else. He has been so carefully guarded that he has practically no independent existence apart from that of the parent who has moulded and shaped him. Suppose it were possible for a father to train his son, strictly and absolutely, after this method—what sort of man would he grow up to be, do you suppose? Would you not think him a mere nonentity? You would realize that to have him stay good as long as he lived, he must never be separated from his father. The only hope of his remaining virtuous would lie in his remaining bound and restricted: the kind of goodness that such a boy had would be utterly inconsistent with freedom. No father ever yet succeeded in train-

ing a child precisely in this way; but we have often seen parents who have tried to, and just in measure as they have succeeded have they made the children of such training poor, weak creatures, with little true moral strength or steadfast virtue.[1]

Contrast such a training with that of a boy whose father has carefully inculcated in him the keenest sense of duty and the deepest principles of morality, but has sought to guide rather than force his thought. He has been constantly pointed to what is good and right and honorable, but he has been allowed to see the other side, too, warned of its perils, told of its hatefulness, but allowed to face it for himself and left to make his choice from right principles. Such a boy will probably do things that are wrong, but under the guidance of a good father he will ordinarily grow into a strong, sturdy, moral manhood. Suddenly deprived of the father's guidance, he will not plunge into weak and sinful excesses but will face evil alone and gain now in moral power by the same strength that has become his in facing these very things before with the father's help and guidance.

Now we may reverently say that God, in training us His children, had to choose between these two methods—except that with Him either plan could have been carried to perfection. As was said before, however, the first method would never have produced a real humanity, it would have generated a race of "doll children", so to speak. However perfectly evil

[1] See Latham, *Pastor Pastorum*, lecture ii.

might have been avoided, the result would have been a wooden perfection. It could have been said, "These are good men, good women," but only in the sense in which we now speak of a "good" picture, or a "good" tool, or a "good" piece of workmanship.

So it will be seen to some extent why evil exists in God's world from the beginning, at least as a possibility of thought. God, when He made man, wished to create a being whose goodness would be a moral goodness, who would serve Him from choice, whose virtue of life would be a growth and development, not a finished creation. God, therefore, made man a free agent. The story of the Garden of Eden shows how the man so made was left to choose to serve his Creator. It is not necessary to insist that the narrative shall be read as literal prose fact. It need not be historical truth. It is embodied truth. Stripped of its imagery, the story tells us that man was placed in a condition of life in which all was good and fair; that evil, however, was there in thought for him to contemplate, that he was to know it as a possibility, but not from actual experience. Left thus, our first forefather, at Satan's temptation, fell. The pleasures of sin were placed before Eve, and she and Adam with her were lured into tasting evil. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was there for them to look upon, for they must know of the possibility of evil or they could not be really good. They chose to know more than the possibility, they would know experimentally, and so they fell. But it was infinitely

better that they should be in danger of falling than that they should be kept under God's perfect restraint and made to do right. It is the crowning glory of man, some one has said, that he can stand before his Creator and say, "I will not." Had he contemplated his power and declared instead, "Lord, I will; help me and I will," the story of the race would have been a very different one; but had the choice never been given the narrative would never have been a human story at all. Men became evil when they used against God the power that was given them to use for Him.

Perhaps some one will say that such an explanation as this implies that God is the author of imperfection. Nothing of the sort. God, when He had made man, could look upon His own creation, and "behold, it was very good." But this goodness was an undeveloped perfection; it was the perfection of a beautifully formed bud, not the perfection of the full-blown flower. God made the first man with the goodness of childhood, intending that this should develop into the stronger, deeper, richer goodness of full-grown age.

It would not be honest, however, to pass over this aspect of the subject without squarely meeting one decided difficulty which the thought of the day forces upon us. It is constantly objected to the doctrine of the fall of man that if Adam's transgression means also the downfall of the race, the conception goes wholly against the evolutionary theory. This theory —which is now generally accepted—tells us of a

progressive development from inorganic matter to organic, from brute to man, and from primitive man to the race as we find it to-day. Now Christianity seems to run counter to all this with its "belief in a moral change for the worse, happening at a definite time, and yet affecting the whole human race." Is this theory of a moral degradation reasonable, we are asked, in view of the general fact of constant advance? Is it not natural to suppose that man is in every way higher and better to-day than was his first forefather? Was the fall a fall up instead of down?

We can only reply to this that science above everything else teaches us to be true to facts; and the presence of sin in the world, of a disorder and struggle in human nature which is unnatural, is something we must honestly face.[2] No theory of evolution is complete which ignores the fact that while man is indeed developing and making progress, his progress is checked and impeded in one part, and that the very highest part, of his nature. However great his development has been, it is still a retarded development, slower than it might have been, less regular and less sure than God meant it to be. Sin seems to be the cause of this; it only can account for the dark shadow which rests upon all human history and has held man back from his full development—and sin itself cannot be satisfactorily explained. It is the one irrational, lawless, meaningless thing in the whole universe. It is because he is true to facts, then, that a

[2] The following paragraph is condensed from Aubrey Moore, *Science and the Faith.*

Christian evolutionist refuses to acquiesce in the easy optimism of those who see but one side of human development and ignore this great obstacle to the true progress of the race. No revelation is needed to show how deep and wide is the havoc which sin has wrought in the world. The very world agony through which we have passed is too awful a "reversion to type" to be regarded as merely a reversion.

To go back again to our argument after this interruption, let us repeat: God made man good and then man lost his original goodness. He made man at harmony with Himself and man by his disobedience broke that harmony, became separated from God and lost the grace which alone kept him true to himself. We may illustrate what happened at the fall by saying that man, being made in the image of God, was intended to reflect God's likeness, as our own features are reflected in the smooth surface of a pool of water. At the fall this reflected image was marred, rather than absolutely lost. We look at our faces as reflected in a mirror, and if we break the glass the reflection is hopelessly gone; we look into the pool and if by stirring up the water or disturbing its surface the image becomes broken or dulled we know that by and by it will be restored, when the water is smooth and clear again. So, when man fell, the image of God was lost, but not lost in such a way as to be destroyed beyond hope of restoration.

One word, too, as to the fact that when Adam fell the whole race fell with him. Let it be emphasized

again that it is not necessary to assert that the whole story of Genesis is bald, literal fact. It is a great epic which embodies a great truth. We are getting to realize more and more in our day the solidarity of mankind. No man can live to himself. Whatever he does must affect many others and his sins and his virtues alike inevitably influence many lives beyond his own. We need not be surprised, therefore, when we are told that in the infancy of the race all mankind was to be found in embryo, as it were, and so all future generations were affected by the first sin.

Original sin is this inherited taint in our nature, that marring and spoiling of our original purity that makes us prone to evil. Just as the child of the consumptive is born with a physical weakness that tends to the development of tuberculosis, so the child of the drunkard or of the thief, any child (for all have had ancestors with some sinful weakness) is born with a perverted nature, with a tendency to sin, which may be restrained and overcome in large measure, but which is there, nevertheless, and must be corrected. Man has fallen from God, and must be won back.

And, thank God, he can be won back, can be helped back. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The race fell because it was knit up into unity in Adam, its progenitor, and the race can be lifted up when it is united in Christ, its new head. We are confident that this world of ours, scarred with its battlefields, darkened with its ignorance and vice, defiled with the unceasing impurities

of men, is yet crowned with a halo of light, bathed in an atmosphere of holiness, for upon it stands the form of the Son of Man, and radiating from Him are streams of never-ceasing grace. Only through Jesus Christ can we know what God is. Only through Jesus Christ can we know also what man should be. Only through Jesus Christ is there hope that man may become what he was meant to be.

X.

THE ATONEMENT

WE have seen that man has a fallen nature. We are now to ask how that nature is to be restored in Christ. This brings us to the consideration, first of all, of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. Hardly any article of the faith has been so distorted and caricatured as this, so it may be well at the very start to ask what it really is.

Briefly, the doctrine is this: That Christ died for our sins, giving His life a ransom for us; that by His death upon the cross He took away the sin of the world, and by our union with Him we are restored to the divine favor. "The death of the Lord Jesus," Canon Liddon puts it, "paid the debt which man owed and which man of himself could not pay to the Justice and Sanctity of God. His obedience to the divine will took the form of expiation, and became a satisfaction for sin to the All-Just."

It has been objected to this doctrine that since God made men what they are He cannot be in the position of demanding reparation for sins committed by them because of the weakness of His own creation.

Moreover, we are told that to picture God seeking to punish men for their sins, being turned from His wrathful purpose by the goodness of His Son, and accepting the death of one person for the offenses of others—all this is to make God an unreasonable tyrant and a capricious judge, rather than a merciful and loving Father.

To meet these objections, and to show how they caricature the doctrine of the Church, we must first go back and look at that which made the Atonement necessary—sin. We are all conscious of it. We know that we have sinned, and that our offense has not been against our own nature only, or even against our fellow beings, but that most of all we have grieved and offended God. The psalmist wonderfully recognizes this when he thinks chiefly of God as the victim of his ill-doing. "Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." We have all sinned and all of us who have any true sorrow for sin realize that our wrong-doing has not merely degraded and injured ourselves, but is an offense against God, an offense, too, that makes us deserving of punishment: when we have sinned, we ought to pay the penalty of our sin.

Nor is this all. When we seriously think about it we know that it is utterly impossible for us to pay this penalty. Sin has made us displeasing to God and we are in no position to make Him an offering; every fresh sin makes a new payment necessary and for the least of our offenses—and most of all, for the sum of them—nothing that we could offer would ever

be an adequate recompense. Sin, too, has so deadened the conscience that it cannot even offer the satisfaction of complete penitence. How, then, shall our recovery be effected? Shall God forgive us fully and freely, without exacting a penalty? God can do that, of course, but He can hardly do it and be consistent with Himself. We must remember that God is not only good and loving, but just and holy; and His justice as well as His goodness must be satisfied. To allow sin to go unpunished would be to cast justice to the winds and put a weak sentimentality in its place. God is the Creator of moral responsibility; and "would He be faithful to Himself if, after having laid down these great principles of morality in the nature and conscience of man, He did not do homage to them by judging men according to these rules which He Himself has established?" [1]

Nor would it be just to man to forgive in this loose, lax, free fashion. All true forgiveness must show sin for what it is. If I forgive my child for his offense, I must, for his sake as well as for the sake of truth and righteousness, forgive him in such a way as not to diminish or benumb his sense of guilt. I must not let my love and tenderness be such as to lead him into an easy-going, good-natured carelessness. The sin must not be made to appear less hateful or less painful than it really is.

There are, then, these facts: Man has sinned. God is good and would forgive him. But God is also

[1] Godet: *New Testament Studies.*

just and sin is hateful; and before God can freely forgive this must be made clear. The pardon must not be such as to obscure God's holiness or palliate man's sin, and lest this should be the case some penalty from the guilty one must be exacted or acknowledged. Sinful man is incapable of making the needed satisfaction, though it be but the penalty of true penitence. How, then, can both the goodness and the justice of God be satisfied?

Here comes the Christian answer: Jesus Christ, by His perfect life here on earth, fulfilled all of God's law. He, then, is fitted to make a sacrifice and propitiation for sin. He makes the sacrifice for us. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that He might save us, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death.

But how, it may be asked, can such an offering avail us? If God be perfectly just, how can He be satisfied with one man's well-doing in propitiation for another's evil deeds?

There are two ways of answering these questions. The first lies in a right apprehension of the truth of the Incarnation. The Son of God, when He came on earth, took to Himself not one single human life but human nature generally. It was manhood and not man that the Son took into union with Himself and so when He suffered on the cross He suffered not as a single human being but as the representative and head of the race, as one who had in Himself something of the nature of every member of the race. In

one sense, therefore, it may be said that all mankind suffered in Christ, and so that which owed the debt paid it. "Taking to Himself our flesh," says Hooker, "and by His Incarnation making it His own flesh, He had now of His own although from us what to offer unto God for us."

It does seem, however, that the other answer is the one which emphasizes more clearly our individual connection with the sacrifice of Calvary. This second view bids us remember that a sufficient satisfaction for sin is found in the offender's real penitence. God would not exact any other penalty, if that could be offered; He would let the penalty pass, if once the right to exact it were seen and acknowledged. From the first moment of the fall, man had failed to comprehend, as God would have him see it, the awfulness of sin. If he could once be made to see that, if he could be brought to a humble and penitent acknowledgment of His position as under the condemnation of death, then God's justice would be appeased. As Godet puts it: "That which God desired was not the satisfaction of the demands of His justice by the effusion of torrents of blood; it was the revelation to the conscience of men of those demands which they had refused to recognize; it was the willing acknowledgment of them by that conscience itself. And why was this? Because herein lies the true restitution for wrong committed; and herein, consequently, the true basis for the reëstablishment of moral order when it has been disturbed. When the will which disturbed it has once convinced itself of having been in the

wrong, and has passed sentence of death upon itself, then order has triumphed in the midst of the world of disorder. God can the more easily relax the demands of His justice, when the righteousness of those demands has been recognized by the transgressor." [2]

We can see how Christ's sacrifice accomplishes this. Just as human forgiveness in its best forms is saved from being demoralizing when the forgiven child has been made to see the pain given by its fault to the forgiving parent, so we discover the awful analogue of this, when divine forgiveness comes indeed freely, but comes by divine Love itself bearing, before our eyes, our sins or their results. Jesus Christ came into the world, He lived here the perfect life God has designed for men, He was absolutely without sin, and when He was put to death men saw the enormity of sin in all its horror. If sin did that, they must say, as they looked at the cross—if sin did that, or if sin be so hateful in God's sight as to make such a sacrifice necessary—then we begin to see what we deserve for our transgressions. "Come down from the cross, O Thou Holy One of God," we can say, "come down from the cross, it is I that should be there, not Thou." In the death of Christ, and in nothing else, we can see the awfulness of sin and can be brought to acknowledge the penalty that is its due; there, and nowhere else, the pain and shame of sin are awakened; there its full horror is at last realized; there we are convinced of our own guilt, "pricked at

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[2] Godet: *New Testament Studies.*

the heart"; there, in the supreme moment of forgiveness, we find that the forgiveness is made possible because now we see sin through the eyes of God.

Since the Great War began to burn its lessons into men's souls, it has been easier to feel, even though one cannot understand, how the death of Christ forwarded God's purposes for mankind. The bulk of the suffering of the war has been sacrificial and the law which was fulfilled in Christ's passion has been receiving a fresh fulfilment in the sufferings of millions of His brethren. One of the compensations of the war has been that its wealth of self-giving has shed upon life a new glory and given it a new meaning. Its awful cloud has been tinged with the silver lining of a splendid sacrifice and that sacrifice, like Christ's, has been a vicarious offering. Men have been giving of themselves, of all they possess and all they hold dear, simply for the sake of humanity. A distinguished professor of Oxford has told us how, day by day, he was haunted by the thought that men were dying for him; young men, noble men, men whom he knew and loved were laying down their lives that he and others might be free. "It solemnizes me," he wrote, "and gives me a new insight into the mystery and glory of life."

Ah, yes! "A God indifferent to the cries of a world in distress can be to us no God at all. Unlike the serene and indifferent gods of the pagan world, the God of Christianity is a God who sympathizes with men. In all their affliction He is afflicted. He

carries their woes on His infinite heart. In days when multitudes of hearts are sorely troubled, where shall we obtain relief? In the thought that the Eternal suffers with us. It is the inexorable demand of our heart that the God of the universe shall carry a cross! Those young men who have died—not for themselves, but for others—were symbols of the suffering of Christ as they offered their vicarious sacrifice. They entered by their dying as a permanent force into the life of the world. They have made it easier for others to live. They have added a brightness to the skies which bend over their graves." [8]

All this is but man's feeble thought about the Atonement. We must not forget that after all we cannot expect to understand very clearly its great mystery. "How, or in what particular way, Christ's death was efficacious, there are not wanting people who have endeavored to explain but I do not find that Scripture explains it," said Bishop Butler, and Bishop Alexander calls that sentence one of the wisest in all theology. After all, there is one thing only that we are certain of about the Atonement. Whatever else we know, whatever we guess at, whatever we doubt, this one thing is beyond cavil: the exceeding great love of the cross. It shows us, not an angry Father propitiated by a loving Son but Father and Son, together, out of the infinite affection of an infinitely loving heart, coöperating in procuring man's salva-

[8] Jefferson: *Old Truths and New Facts.*

tion. The Son gladly comes to save; the Father as gladly sends Him. The cross is, for both, the outpouring of love immeasurable. In its presence we bow in adoration and worship; for its blessing we lift up the voice of praise and thanksgiving. Once we have felt its power, we can hardly lose faith or hope or grateful affection. Its message rings down the ages, and it is a message that tells us ever the same story: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

XI.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LIFE-GIVER

WE should have a very one-sided view of the Atonement, were we to regard it simply as the work of Jesus Christ for us. There is also a work to be done in us.

The author of this work is God the Holy Ghost. He is the Other Advocate sent from the Father by the Son, to take Christ's place with His people and to finish our redemption. In succeeding chapters, which will treat of the Church and the sacramental system, we shall see how God the Holy Ghost works within us, sanctifying us and fitting us for the heavenly life. Here we shall first try to learn something of His person and office.

To understand this, we go direct to the Holy of Holies, the inmost sanctuary of Holy Scripture, our Lord's beautiful and tender address to His apostles on the night before He suffered. On this occasion Jesus spake plainly and fully of the Holy Spirit. Heretofore there had been many references in His teaching to the Third Person of the adorable Trinity and such references had gradually become more and

more clear, but here we reach the very heart of our Lord's teaching about the Spirit. He is spoken of as the other Comforter, who was to take Christ's place and abide with His disciples forever. Though unknown to the world, He was already known to the apostles, for He was with them and one day would be in them. He would not only teach them all things, but would remind them of all that Jesus had taught. He, the Spirit of truth proceeding from the Father, would be sent to them by the Son and so full of blessing would His advent be that it would be better for them to be without Christ's visible presence than to be without the presence of the Holy Ghost. Through Him the world would realize its sinfulness and its need; through Him it would learn what righteousness is and would have a sense of coming judgment; through Him the disciples would be guided into all truth; through Him the Son of Man would be glorified.[1]

So far as they were then able to enter into this teaching the apostles must have learned that the place of Jesus Christ would be supplied by an invisible Person, whose teaching would be entirely concerned with one subject, Jesus Christ, and whose mission would be to make the world understand and know Him.

As these were the last words spoken by our Lord to His Church before He suffered, so the first words after His resurrection were concerned with the same

[1] See especially St. John xiv. 16-17; xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7, 9-11, 13-14.

subject. On Easter Day He gave the apostles the gift He had promised, by breathing on them, explaining His action by the words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The Holy Spirit now took possession of the Church of God, indwelling it and so enabling it to exercise the power of loosing from sin, a gift which it was soon dispatched into the world to minister through baptism into the Triune Name.

We pass now to the teaching of the apostles. It was doubtless difficult for them to realize the personality of One whom they had not seen and could not see. They were brought to this realization, therefore, by the complete manifestation of the presence of the Spirit given them on the Day of Pentecost, when in fulfilment of our Lord's promise a sound of a rushing mighty wind was heard and filled the whole house where they were sitting, the sight of a sheet of flame divided into tongues was seen, and an intense spiritual exhilaration and enthusiasm possessed the apostles. Some time after, when the disciples had undergone persecution, a similar manifestation occurred, the house where they were assembled being shaken and their feelings again strangely elevated, so that they were able to speak the word with all boldness.

It was now increasingly felt that the Holy Ghost dwelt in the whole body of the faithful. To attempt to deceive the Church, as did Ananias and his wife, was to try to deceive the Holy Ghost. To resist the doctrine of the Church was to resist the Holy Ghost.

The word of the Church was the word of the Spirit.[2] Further, it was believed that the Holy Spirit was ordinarily given by the laying on of hands, though He was not tied to this means. Any divine inspiration was felt to be His. The intuitive feeling to set aside Barnabas and Saul for their work was felt to be a movement from the Holy Ghost, and the two went upon their mission with the conviction that they were sent by Him. St. Philip is moved by the Holy Ghost to take a particular road and join the chariot of the eunuch; St. Paul is forbidden by the same divine Person to extend his work into Asia; he is warned, also, by the Spirit of what would happen to him in Jerusalem.

From such facts it is clear what our Lord meant by saying to His followers that He would give them another Comforter. The Holy Ghost is here seen to be taking the place of the Lord Christ. He is to the Church of the Acts what Christ was to the first disciples. He gives comfort, joy, courage, advice, and warning, and He does all as the Spirit of Jesus.

In the Epistles we find doctrinally what the Book of the Acts tells us historically. St. Paul speaks of the assistance which the Holy Ghost renders us in our spiritual life in helping our prayers, of the assurance of sonship which He gives, of the knowledge of God which He imparts, of His indwelling us, so that our bodies become His temple, of the various gifts He

[2] See Acts v. 3-4; Acts vii. 51 compared with ix. 31; Acts xv. 28.

ministers to us, of the danger of grieving Him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Old Testament is said to be the voice of the Holy Spirit; while St. James speaks of His longing to make us His own, St. Jude of His being the power in which we pray, St. Peter of His moving holy men of old in their scriptural messages and of His power in stirring up the prophets to search into the deeper meaning of their own dark sayings. Finally, St. John speaks of the message of the Spirit to the seven churches, of His confirmation of the voice from heaven, of His communion with the Church, and of His symbolic manifestation as the seven spirits seen before the throne in the vision on Patmos.[3]

It is a modern tendency to regard the revelation of the Spirit as impersonal. Language is used which would imply that the Holy Ghost is a divine mode or faculty or influence. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Holy Ghost is not only divine, He is a divine Person.

(1) He is divine. This is so plain in Scripture that he who runs may read. There is little use to do more than touch on the evidence of the fact. We know that He is God because divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is eternal (Hebrews ix. 14), omniscient (I Cor. ii. 10), omnipotent (St. Luke i. 35), omnipresent (Psalm cxxxix. 1), all sovereign

[3] See Acts viii. 16; ix. 17; xix. 6; xiii. 2; xiii. 4; viii. 29; xvi. 6-7; Romans viii. 26; viii. 14, 16; I Cor. ii. 9; iii. 16; vi. 19; xii. 11; Eph. iv. 30; I St. Timothy iv. 1; Hebrews iii. 7 and ix. 8; St. James iv. 5; I St. Peter i, 11, etc.

(I Cor. xii. 11). Failure to recognize Him is failure to recognize God (Acts v. 4; I Cor. iii. 16); blasphemy against Him is worse than blasphemy against the Son (St. Matthew xii. 31-32); to lie to Him is to lie to God (Acts v. 4); our bodies, because they are the temple of the Holy Spirit, are the temple of God (I Cor. vi. 19 and II Cor. vi. 6). Plainest of all, as showing His divinity, is the fact that in the baptismal formula and the apostolic benediction divine homage is rendered to Him as to the Father and the Son.

(2) He is not only divine, He is a divine Person. The central and decisive passage of Scripture, the address at the Last Supper, is sufficient proof of this. "There we have the Holy Ghost revealed to us in so many words as *Him,* not only as It; as the living and conscious Exerciser of true personal will and love. And this central passage radiates out its glory upon the whole system and circle of Scripture truth about the Spirit." [1]

The Holy Ghost is not a mere abstraction: else how should we be told of His personal acts, that He "maketh intercession for us", that He is the true author of our "diversities of gifts", "dividing to every man severally as He will", that He may be sinned against, that such sin "grieves" Him? How could it be said of an impersonal influence that it was sinned against, or grieved? When our Lord says, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will guide you into all truth," we have clearly set

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[1] Moule: *Veni Creator.*

forth in that one short sentence the distinct personality of each of the members of the Triune Godhead.

This Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. The first chapters of the Bible show Him to us as the giver of physical life, moving upon the face of the waters and bringing order out of chaos and renewing again the earth after the flood. No less is He giver of intellectual life, sending skill and understanding to the architects of the tabernacle, supplying the wisdom of Moses, moving and inspiring the prophets.

So, too, He is the author of the new creation, the giver of spiritual life. It is by His overshadowing of the Blessed Virgin that a new point of departure is inaugurated in the Incarnation. He it is, also, who brings about the new birth in man. We are "born again by water and the Holy Ghost"; we are saved through "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost"; we are washed, sanctified, "in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God." "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

The Holy Ghost it is, then, who imparts the spark of the new spiritual fire within us; He quickens and re-kindles it by His grace; He inspires us with holy desires, and when we sin renews us to repentance; in a word, He "sanctifieth us and all the people of

God." To Him, then, we owe peculiar love and adoration as the Lord and the Life-Giver. May it be our constant prayer not to resist His gracious influence, lest by our indifference and neglect we "grieve" and "quench" the Spirit, and drive Him away as He comes to make our bodies His temple, the dwelling place of His glory.

XII.

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

PRAYER is bringing God and the soul together and leaving them alone. I like that definition better than any other. Prayer is the effort of the human spirit to have conscious companionship with the Divine Spirit. For that reason prayer is the most difficult thing in the world.

It is not an easy matter to know *any* one. With how many persons are you intimately acquainted? It is only now and then, after long friendship and close association and under the impulse of respect or admiration or love, that we go beyond the partial manifestations of character to the personality behind them. Prayer is the effort to know God. Private prayer means trying to know Him well enough to speak to Him simply and naturally. Of course that could not be easy.

What makes prayer still more difficult is that God is invisible. It is so hard to appreciate the actuality of the unseen.

There are steps by which we may approach to

certainty of God's unseen presence. We can hardly look about us without feeling that there must be some unseen energy or activity behind the visible creation. That may be impersonal energy, of course, but we can hardly think so, if we try to reason about it in exactly the way we reason about human activity. All that you see of a man is the outward part of him, but his actions tell of a personal spirit within, the source and spring of his outward activity and power. You see his body, but you cannot see the man himself, the inner spirit. One makes the leap from nature to God just as one moves naturally and inevitably from the thought of human activity to the thought of human personality. God is behind and within and all through nature as the spirit is within the body. God is not simply an impersonal influence, nor is God identical with His world. He is the Soul of things.

It is a fatal defect of modern religious thought that it tends to regard the Holy Spirit as a divine influence or a divine mode or faculty. We have many prayers addressed to the Father or to the Son, but all too seldom a prayer addressed to the Spirit. Yet the simplest way to begin to pray is to think, and think hard, of God as Spirit and of the Holy Spirit as the living and conscious Exerciser of personal will and power and love.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew;
That I may love what Thou dost love
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will
To do or to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die;
But live with Thee the perfect love
Of Thine Eternity.

Prayer, then, is intercourse with the unseen God. It is not petition only, though petition is a part of prayer. It need not follow any fixed form, though form may be evidence of reverent thought. It need not even be speech with God—we can pray without words. It is the establishing of personal relationship with the Divine Companion.

There are difficulties innumerable once we begin to discuss the efficacy of prayer. Why should God make His gifts depend upon our petitions? What is the real relation between prayer and human effort? How can prayer be reconciled with the reign of law? How can our prayers help anybody but ourselves? What about the seemingly unanswered prayers of good people? Elsewhere I have tried to face some of these difficulties frankly and honestly. I am obliged now to make choice between going again into the whole question of the reasonableness of prayer and simply dealing practically with prayer as a habit and I choose

the latter course and refer my readers to other books for the apologetic side of the subject.[1]

Remember that the heart and soul of the Christian religion is the belief that God was once revealed in Christ, a divine Person who manifested Himself to men and before He disappeared from sight pledged His continued presence with them, a presence unseen but no less real than was His presence while He was here on earth. Remember that the early disciples who had seen Him in the days of His flesh were so certain of His continued presence in succeeding days that nothing could shake their faith. Before you begin to pray, think of this revelation in Christ—think until He becomes real for you. In other words, get absolutely alone and practise the presence of God.

All this is difficult, of course. Did we not say that prayer is the most difficult thing in the world? But it is worth while making every possible effort; for without prayer other means of grace are hindered in their operation. Prayer, some one has said, breaks up the ground of the soul, so that the Sower can sow the seed of His own personality in it. Difficult? Yes, to be sure. It means spending some time with God, a long time if need be. It takes a long time to get close enough to any friend to be able to understand

[1] See chapter ix. of my book, *The Experiment of Faith;* also chapter vii. of *Back to Christ.* Any one who wishes to go into the matter deeply and thoroughly should read a collection of essays by English Churchmen, entitled *Concerning Prayer.* See also, Slattery: *Why Men Pray,* and some practical books on Prayer by Carey. Fosdick, McComb, and others.

him and absorb his strength. It takes a long time to get close enough to God to have Him change the whole tone and temper of our lives. If you cannot pray long, break up your prayers into short petitions and say each of them with the greatest care and earnestness. Do not expect that God will hear you, if you yourself do not attend. Shut out earthly thoughts and try hard to think His thoughts. "Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee."

Failure in prayer is due also to the fact that most people have never been taught how to pray. We have been told that we must speak to God, but we have never been told how to speak with Him. Indeed, it is not easy to tell some one else how you do a thing, because what helps one man may not help another. Suppose we start with some such method as this:

We begin by recollecting God's presence and then start with confession:

God, I am kneeling here in Your presence. I want You to look at me and tell me just what You think of me. Help me to think out these thoughts after You. Show me my weaknesses, my shortcomings, my inconsistencies. Show me the things about myself of which You most disapprove, the sins that are a lawless disregard of Your wishes and purposes for me and an offense against the ordered harmony of Your world.

That is confession. Then go on to adoration:

God, show me what You are. Help me to think quietly and seriously until I get a clear idea of what You must be, in Your purity and holiness, Your power, Your justice, Your

stern hatred of evil, Your pity, Your love. Help me to understand the strength and splendor of an All-Holy Being who is all that the best of men and women are and a million times more besides. Help me to be very still now while I think about You.

That is adoration.

Now begin to tell God what you know about yourself; what you would like to be, what you ought to do. Ask Him to help you to be what He would have you.

Then tell Him of the things you want, things you actually need for your health, comfort, peace, and happiness. Ask Him to give them to you, if He too thinks they are good for you to have.

Don't forget to thank Him for all He has given you. Think about your health, your friends, your natural blessings, your special advantages, your social blessings, your talents and opportunities and responsibilities.

Then bring to Him the needs of others, your family and the friends who make your life worth living. When you have done this, ask Him to enlarge the circle of your interests and tell Him about the needs of the community, the Church, the nation, the world. Bring to Him, in such a way as to show how keenly and deeply you feel it, the world's sorrow and the world's sin.

Ask Him to show others their need of Him, as He has shown you your need. Ask Him to make them ashamed of their sin and neglect of Him. Ask Him to make them conscious of His goodness and His power. Ask Him to help men everywhere to serve

Him faithfully until His will be done on earth as it is in heaven and His purpose for men be everywhere accomplished.

Then ask God to show you how you can work for the accomplishment of some of the things you have asked Him to do and resolve that what you are clearly shown you will start at once to do.

Before you close, take another moment for recollection of His presence and then tell Him again that you realize your unworthiness, and that you take courage to speak to Him because you believe in Jesus Christ and all for which He stood, and are trying to ask only what you believe Jesus Christ would like to have you ask and be willing that you should work for. Tell Him that you know you are not worthy to offer any petition unless it be offered in union with His sacrifice. Remember that whether you understand prayer or not, you pray because Christ prayed. I think He knew.

I do not know whether this is the way in which you will learn to pray. I only know that it is the way in which I learned. I suppose, too, that for many people it will seem a rather large programme. Do as much of it as you can. Try out a little bit of it at a time. In the end you will not find the whole programme quite as formidable as it looks. At any rate, the plan will suggest several things about prayer which we need to remember if our prayers are to have any reality.

First, it shows us that essentially prayer is inter-

course with a divine Person. Sometimes the religion of Jesus Christ seems hard to grasp because it is so profound, but really it is easy to grasp because it is so absolutely human. We ourselves are persons and we know that our hearts are always feeding on the hearts of other men. Your character is that on which another man draws, consciously or unconsciously. "A man's courage, a man's insight, a man's experience, a man's form of character, these things flow down to weaker souls as surely as water flows down from a height above." There are men in whose presence we cannot be weak or cowardly, just because character cannot be confined and personality cannot be pressed within close limits. The mind gets its power as the body gets its strength, from what it feeds on; and such men are always feeding other men. The wonderful thing about God's personality is that it, too, is outflowing. The pity is, that we have dammed up the channels through which the stream of His life flows into ours.

The method of prayer recommended suggests also that God often answers prayer through human agents and in human work. The skill and understanding of the physician; the new health laws which medical science is constantly discovering; above all, the deeper sympathy with the world's pain and the quickened desire to help which have lightened to such an extent the world's burden—who knows what part prayer has had in all this? The spirit of social service which has brought light into so many dark places and made human life so much less unendurable—who can say

how much prayer had to do with the enlightenment? The new sense of corporate responsibility, with its education towards a better industrial order—has prayer had nothing to do with opening our eyes there? There is indeed an "intercession which is coöperation with God," and God has been showing us many things of late of which the world has long been ignorant. The growth of the social spirit as a late fruit of Christianity may "make possible the rebirth of a Christian community which can become the strongest force in the world," and prayer pointed out the path of progress.[2]

Next: the condition of prayer is that it shall be in Christ's name. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you," is His promise. Our intentions and desires should be in harmony with that revelation which His life gives. The condition that He requires is not fulfilled merely by adding a formal mention of His mediation, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," at the conclusion of our petitions. We are bound to enter into union with Him and "let this mind be in [us] which was also in Christ Jesus." This implies real repentance, an honest purpose of amendment of life, and a steadfast desire and effort to be like Him.

Praying in His name also means that the soul approaches God through the merits of Jesus Christ. One of the English chaplains urges the use of an ancient and popular method of prayer long since for-

[2] *Concerning Prayer: Its Nature, Its Difficulties, and Its Value.*

gotten among us, which he found most helpful in teaching his men the power of Christ's mediation. By it each great event in our Lord's life is taken separately and in order and pleaded before Him:

By Thy Holy Nativity in Bethlehem, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thy Baptism in the River Jordan, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thy Fasting and Temptation, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thine Agony on the Cross, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thy Precious Death and Burial, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thy Glorious Resurrection and Ascension, save us and help us, O Lord.

By Thy Pleading for us in Heaven, save us and help us, O Lord.

People in these days are just as unaccustomed to original devotion and just as discouraged in attempting longer prayers as were people in the "ages of ignorance". How many who have read this chapter have felt that the programme already laid down is impossible for them? A simple devotion like this, therefore, which all can remember, ought to be helpful. It can be used anywhere or at any time. It embodies the chief events in our Lord's life and as they are meditated upon even in this simple way they come to have new meaning in the hearts of those who use the intercession. "Men have told me," says the chaplain, "that they have used it even during a charge. Men who wanted to pray and did not know how, have found this something which they can enter into and

understand and never outgrow. It creates an atmosphere of religion vigorous enough to withstand the spiritually depressing atmosphere of the world. It keeps boys from forgetting the religious instruction they received in school. In the hospital one day I found a man using the 'chaplet'. He was full of it! It had made him wish to be confirmed and become a communicant. In fact, it had changed his whole religious outlook, which before he used the 'chaplet' had been purely formal." [8]

Unquestionably we have often made the mistake of expecting too much of people. We expect everybody to be an advanced and proficient Christian. We think we ought to be such ourselves. If we find this beyond us, it does not occur to us that at least we can be simple Christians and carry over into manhood a little of our childhood faith.

We shall learn to pray better in private, if we practise public prayer more faithfully. Actually, whatever we may say about the need of church going, we find that when people neglect public worship sooner or later their practice of religion declines. Most of all, is there need of using the service of Holy Communion for intercession. Celebrations should be frequent enough to train worshippers in devotion. I am inclined to believe that many of the men who come back from France will bring back with them a new appreciation of the power of eucharistic worship

[8] *The Church in the Furnace.*

and some of the clergy at least will have quite a different attitude as to the value of eucharistic adoration and the use of the reserved sacrament as a help to devotion. They will have seen the women in France, "kneeling before some dimly lighted altar, their lips moving in devoted entreaty to the Holy Presence they believe to be there before them", and they will be a little chary of declaring emphatically that the custom is altogether wrong when it makes a sanctuary out of a dead building and a place of perpetual prayer out of an auditorium for weekly preaching.

Our Lord teaches us the value of united prayer. It is stamped with His approval, blessed with His gracious promise. Our religion is social. We are not just so many souls to be saved individually, we are members of a divine society; even before that, children of a common Father's family. The Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father", not "My Father".

It is not through formal public worship only that we receive the blessings of united prayer. One sees sometimes in the churches of Europe groups of people saying their prayers aloud without any priest to lead their devotions and one wonders why there should not be many bands of faithful Church people in our own parishes meeting together in the same way to plead for special objects. Corporate communions will be especially useful in training our people in united devotion.

But vocal prayer even is not necessary. I do not know when I have been so vividly impressed by that

fact as when at the weekly meetings of the Rotary Clubs during the last year of the war I have seen large groups of men, at the stroke of a bell, stand for a minute in silent petition that God would guide the nation and its president, make us worthy of victory, and give speedy success to our armies and those of our allies.

A Church of England clergyman has written of a profoundly moving experience he had while conducting a mission in New Zealand before the war. In the parish where he was preaching, a group of Quakers of the finest type had asked permission to use the vestry of the church for their weekly "silent meeting". Soon some of the people of the parish joined them and after a time the meeting migrated to the church itself. It supplied a felt want. It became an institution. The missioner thus describes it:[4]

"We knelt without a word. There was no sound of vocal prayer, no leader. I cannot put into words what happened, but some aspects of the experience I must try to express. First, there came very quietly the sense of a Presence. The work of prayer became strangely easy. We were not resolutely fixing our thoughts upon a Friend in a far country, but were listening to One who was there in the church—speaking. The still air seemed to vibrate with this Presence that could be felt. God was speaking to us, not in words or voices but in that speech which does not need to be uttered. Yet if I may say so bold a

[4] Cyril Hepher: *The Fellowship of Silence.*

thing it was not what He said that mattered so much as that He was there and we were with Him. That was enough. Then, again, one perception that grew as the minutes slipped by unnoticed was the sense of fellowship. We in that church were no longer isolated individuals. It was unquestionably a corporate act in which we were engaged, or rather a corporate experience that had come to us. We found that the freest guiding of God and the fullest spiritual experience is given through human fellowship. More use of silence in public worship would surely lift us to a higher spiritual level."

In every way in which we have thought of it, then, prayer is hard work. To amount to anything it must mean real effort. It cannot be casual or perfunctory. We have to take time and shut the world out and learn to concentrate the mind on God and subdue our impatience and fill ourselves with the spirit of obedience, until we can think temperately and accurately, judge calmly, and become masters of ourselves and loyal servants of Him whose will we would accomplish. Let the man who desires stronger faith in prayer pray seriously—act and act and act again—and soon he will be absolutely sure of its value. Especially let him examine himself for sin (of this we shall treat later) for so he will discover his need of God—and this need will bring him to his knees.

XIII.

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

A STRIKING feature of modern Christianity is the absence of any corporate conception of religion. Thousands of people think it quite enough to be an "unattached" follower of Christ. Church attendance is irregular; Church membership is considered unnecessary. This does not necessarily mean religious indifference; on the contrary, there is more "diffused Christianity" than ever before, a more general desire to be of use in the world. But, unquestionably, along with this, is a growing neglect of religious institutions. Christianity has become "a mere amorphous aggregate of individual souls". There is an utter absence of any corporate idea of religion.

Even among Church members we find a failure to understand that Christianity is necessarily something larger than individualism. Personal religion there must be, of course. One by one we must surrender to Christ; one by one place ourselves under His influence. He "saved *me* and gave Himself for *me*" and I must accept Him as my Saviour and Lord. All that, surely. But Christianity, as we read it, is more

than that. When, one by one, we have come to Christ, we are not to be left loose and unattached. If we read the gospel story aright, individual fellowship is safeguarded as it becomes merged in corporate fellowship. The religion of Christ is to be embodied in a society—the Church which is His body—and that society, one and undivided, is to go out into the world conquering and to conquer.

There was a time when men hardly dreamed of being religious without belonging to some Christian organization. They might be irreligious and careless and make no professions of Christianity, but they did not for a moment imagine that they could be anything other than irreligious and yet hold aloof from all organized Christianity; if they were believers they must profess some creed and belong to some Church. Now, however, we find an increasing number of men and women, of moral and upright life, professing and calling themselves Christians, and yet identified with no Church, asserting their admiration for Christ, even their love and devotion for Him, perhaps claiming to be in sympathy with His ideals, or it may be with the aims of His Church, even attending occasionally on the services of some religious body, and yet identifying themselves with no Christian communion and holding back from any open Church membership.

You speak to them about their anomalous position, and they give various reasons for their failure to join a Church. Perhaps it is that "they do not feel that they are good enough;" perhaps they cannot

altogether agree with the doctrines of any one body; or, they think "there are too many hypocrites in the churches already"; or, they cannot see the necessity of "joining the Church", they can be followers of Christ without it. They think of Christ as a great moral teacher, a sinless moral example, and they can try to follow Him, without belonging to any organization.

Indeed, we shall find with many that there is an inherent dislike of the very thought of organized Christianity. They love to picture our Lord as One who went about doing good. Crowds of the poor flock to Him for comfort and help, multitudes of the sick press upon Him to be healed, the distressed and heavy laden come to Him for relief, and He receives them all so sweetly and tenderly and graciously! The publicans even, and the notorious sinners, are not turned away. He has time for the little children, and rebukes those who think that He is too busy to be troubled by their demands upon His time.

He speaks so lovingly to them all, too. So simply and beautifully does He explain spiritual things, that men cannot but be drawn to Him, cannot but wish to follow Him, cannot but long to be like Him, cannot but love Him. So we would wish to love Him now, some say; so we want our religion brought to us; so we would have the Gospel in its primitive purity and sweet simplicity. The moment we try to organize all this into a system, the moment you ask us to accept a creed and to tie ourselves to ordinances, that moment the charm of the picture is gone.

Well, that picture in all its beauty is quite true. But it is not the only picture of our Lord's life that the Gospels give us. Our Saviour was all this—sweet and tender and gracious, calling men to Himself and never turning any away, pitiful toward their infirmities and merciful in their sin, drawing them to Him with cords of love. But there is another side of His life, a deeper purpose, an inner motive. There is the real object of His coming, which was revealed at first only to the inner circle of His disciples, and to them little by little. He came to suffer and to die, and to do all this not merely that men might be drawn to Him as individuals, but that they might be organized and knit together in a body, through the power of His risen life—He came as the Son of God to establish a kingdom.[1]

His kingdom! The word is ever on His lips: "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"; "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." He is at the pains to explain by parables that occupy a large part of His time of teaching what that kingdom is, how it is to be started, how it will grow, who will be its subjects, what will be its characteristics.

And this kingdom, we find by and by, is connected with the Church. As we read what the Master says of His kingdom, the thought seems to point sometimes to an organization, sometimes to the rule of Christ in the heart. Now He says to one who

[1] See H. S. Holland: *Creed and Character.*

comes to Him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven"; again the other side is emphasized, when He speaks of this kingdom as a net, or a field of grain, a gathering of souls, some worthy and some unworthy. Soon he begins, too, to speak of His Church, and whether this is identical with the kingdom, or the nucleus of the kingdom, or the appointed means of coming in touch with it, at least the two ideas seem to be closely connected in the mind of the Master. So His heart leaps out to St. Peter, when the acknowledgment of His Messiahship shows the apostle's understanding of His teaching: "Thou art Peter [the Rock-man], and upon this rock [of such faith as thine] I will build My Church."

Yes: our Lord came to found a kingdom, to build a Church. He called His disciples to be made pillars, foundation stones, of this Church; He trained them for that, ordained them, sent them out with wonderful powers. He instituted a sacrament of admission into the kingdom: they were to "go therefore and teach [make disciples, make Christians of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This baptism was to be the means of their entrance into the kingdom: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Brought into the kingdom by baptism, they were to find another sacrament of fellowship and unity, through the life which came from Him: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man," He said, "and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "The Lord Jesus, the same

night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

So St. Paul writes of this sacrament. He is perfectly clear, too, about our Lord's purpose for His Church. With him there was no doubt of the Master's meaning. What a tremendous Churchman St. Paul was! To him the Church which Christ founded is the most wonderful thing on earth. Men, as soon as they believe, are to be brought into it, and when they are so numbered among its members they are in such vital union with Christ that the relationship can be expressed only by so striking a statement as that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." St. Paul regards the Church as the very Body of Christ. As our own bodies have many members, each with its own office, and all joined in living union, so we as members of the Body of Christ, His Church, each called into this membership for some particular work for Christ, are in the closest union with Him, who is the Head.

The thought is not St. Paul's: he received it from the Lord, who had used just as strong a figure when He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." As the branches are knit into the vine, so that the sap flows out into them, and through them to the leaves,

freshening and quickening the youngest shoot, so are we grafted into Christ, the true vine. We are members of His Body, and that Body is His Church.

So the thought, given by our Lord, developed into another figure by St. Paul, is to be traced in the action of the apostles. The real way to come unto Christ is to enter the kingdom. When men believed, they were baptized, and being baptized they became members of an organized body. "The Lord *added to the Church* daily such as were being saved."

After all, this is really the only ground on which we can ask for Church membership and allegiance. We must go "back to Christ" and discover that it is an essential part of His teaching. It is not enough to urge that Church membership is convenient and that an organization is useful in Christian work as in everything else. It is not enough to urge that it is expedient, a practical way of showing the world one's personal acceptance of Christ. It is not sufficient if we show its helpfulness and urge that in common worship we renew our strength. We must show that it is according to "the mind of Christ". If I belong to a Church, I must belong because I find that He commanded or desired it. If He did not regard it as of primary importance; if He did not make it an essential part of His teaching; if, indeed, it did not so largely occupy His thought as to appear to be a vital and integral part of His scheme of redemption —then I am not obliged to give it any large part in my own thought. It is merely a matter of prefer-

ence, of likes and dislikes, of personal inclination and adaptability. I may belong to a Church or not, as I choose.

What our picture of Christ has shown is that the Church is indeed His plan and therefore that we have no right to substitute for it our own ideas. It is His forethought, not man's afterthought. Christ's followers, if they understand His plan, can never be content to be "unattached". They must be more than the "amorphous aggregate of individuals". If there is any one lesson which has been driven home to the conscience of thoughtful and earnest Christians during the past years of war, it is that of our weakness to save the world because of our disunion—and disunion has now become more than a tragically needless multiplication of sects, it is disorganization, individual independence run mad, complete lack of any corporate consciousness. The present situation could never have arisen had Christ's idea been kept in mind. He came not simply to save individuals, but to unite them in a body to carry on His work of salvation.

So we see why we must *belong to some Christian body,* be members of *some* Church. It is the first step by way of obedience to Christ. He commands that we should be baptized; He told His apostles so to make Christians of all men, He said that this was the one way of entrance into His kingdom. He it is, too, who commands the other great act of obedience, the eating of His spiritual flesh and blood in Holy Communion. To obey that command we

must be "members of a Church". Whether we see the need of these things or not, then, whether we see the reason of them or not—we are bound to do what Christ says. He is our Master and His word is law. He commands us to be joined to Him in His Church and therefore we have no choice in the matter.

But His commands are coupled with wonderful promises of life and so we are called upon to "join a Church" because *this is the best way of gaining strength for our spiritual life.* If baptism is really a new birth, as St. John's report of our Lord's words tell us; if the Holy Communion is really a feeding upon Him, so that we receive His glorified life within us; if the sacraments are really the means by which the strength of the Vine flows out into us, who are the branches—then we can be strong here in this spiritual home, as we cannot be if we remain without. We "join the Church", then, that we may find the grace we all need so much if we are to follow the Master we love—or claim, or wish, to love—so well.

Finally, we should belong to the Church because that is *the best way of helping others.* Our Christianity is not true and earnest if it stops at self. We cannot center all our wishes on the saving of our own souls. We wish to help others, even as we need to be helped ourselves. Now we can best do that in the Church—never mind now in *which* Church, but in *some one* of the various religious societies.

What would the world be if all the Churches were swept away to-morrow? Imperfect they are, through

man's sin (even as Christ said would be the fact); but, imperfect as organized Christianity is, yet it is the greatest power for good the world has ever seen or dreamed of. If you know any better way of taking your part in the work of helping others, and so uplifting the world, show it to us; but if you do not know any surer method, then follow Christ's plan, and go where others have found their greatest help and support.

This will suggest some of the objections which one hears against Church membership.

Men say: "I do not go to church, or I do not belong to the Church, because there are so many unworthy members in every denomination I know. It seems sometimes as if Church people were, many of them, nothing but hypocritical and insincere 'professors' of religion." This is the objection which, perhaps, we hear oftenest—that there is a lack of real Christianity on the part of Christians in general, and that the Churches do not, therefore, show sufficient vital force to induce adherence. The complaint is heard very often among men of the working class. One American labor leader has written: "Workingmen like everything in Christianity except Christians. They have lost confidence in the Church, but not in Christ." As another well-known leader phrases it: "The complaint made by American workingmen against the Churches is that they fail to influence conduct, that they fail to impress their fundamental principles on those who give direction to the prac-

tical affairs of life in the counting room, in legislative halls and on the bench, although these men profess Christianity. Laboring men do not feel that it is better for them to work for a Christian than for one who denies the obligations of Christianity—the outcome of experience has not taught them that such is the case; they do not believe that Church membership on the part of their landlord insures just and considerate treatment for his tenants; they do not flock to the merchants who acknowledge Christ as their Master, in confidence that they will merely on that account receive of them honest goods for a fair price."

The complaint is one which may well cause those who are in the Church serious and sober thought. It should bring home to us a solemn sense of our awful responsibility for our fellows.

Yet, so far as the objection is concerned, a little logical dissection may not be amiss. There are bad people in the Churches, are there? Well, we may answer, there are bad people in business, and you meet a lot of dishonest folk wherever you transact any ordinary week-day labor. There are immoral and unworthy people who sit next you when you go to a theater or other place of amusement. If you are a union member, you know that every labor organization has its ugly and brutal followers. There are unpatriotic and unworthy Americans. But you do not renounce business, and give up amusements, and expatriate yourself, on that account. No more should you stay out of the Church because its members are not what they should be. If Christ founded a

Church, and if He left therein a storehouse of grace for the soul, it is your duty to be there, seizing these advantages though others do not, trying if possible, as you follow Christ yourself, to deepen the lives of others who should be following Him too.

There are bad people in the churches, are there? Indeed, did not Christ say there would be? Read the parable of the wheat and the tares, or of the net full of fishes bad and good, and see that it is not at all remarkable that among the members of any Christian denomination there will be some, though by no means as many as you suppose, who are hypocritical, or self-seeking, or inconsistent and insincere. It will be so till the great harvest, when the chaff shall be separated from the wheat. The real point at issue is this: Did or did not Christ Himself found a Church? Did He, or did He not, make it a home of grace? If He did leave the Church behind Him, an organized body, it is our duty to be within its fold, no matter who else may be there or however poorly their lives may square with their profession.

Or, again: "I have never joined a Church, because there are so many Christian denominations that it is impossible to decide among them. I stay outside, therefore, and seek to be a follower of Christ in my own way."

Possibly you have not read the anecdote of the young man who answered an enthusiastic Church worker in that spirit. "Oh, I just run around," he said gaily. "I don't understand the difference between the Churches; in fact, there is a great deal in

the Bible itself that I don't understand, and until I do, of course I can't join any Church."

"How many hours a day do you spend studying this matter?" asked the questioner.

"Hours?" he repeated in surprise.

"Well, then, minutes?"

The young man was dumb.

"Ah," said his companion, with patient sadness, "not one? If you thought a knowledge of geology necessary to your success in life—or astronomy, or shorthand—you would not think of spending less than one hour a day in its study, perhaps two, perhaps three; and you would not expect to know or understand it without that exertion. But the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ, of salvation—the highest and deepest of all knowledge—you sit around and wait for, as if it would come like a flash of lightning."

Does any one see a likeness to himself in this young man who was satisfied "just [to] run around"?

And then there is the man who does not belong to the Church because he is not good enough.

My dear friend, if you thought you were good enough, we should ask you to go back and give it more consideration before you came to seek admission at the door of the kingdom. It is because you are not good enough, that we urge you to come. The Church is not the home of good people; it is a refuge for sinners. If only you realize your own unworthiness, and are longing to be better, and feel that you need help to make you what you would wish to be, then

the Church holds out her arms to welcome you. The Church is not a mutual admiration society where men and women are admitted who have reached a certain degree of goodness; it is rather a resting place for those who are sinful, but find themselves weary and heavy laden with their sin, who can say that the remembrance of their faults is grievous unto them, the burden of them intolerable. If, when you say you are not good enough, you merely mean something of a vague, general character, that you are conscious of sin—we answer, that is the very reason you need to come.

Perhaps you mean more than that. Perhaps there is some special, definite obstacle that keeps you back, some pet fault, some secret disloyalty, some besetting sin, that you will not, and have not tried to give up. Then, we say, if it is something as definite as this, put it away. If for this reason you are not ready to come, make yourself ready. Do you remember how the Lord Christ says, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee [that is, that you have wronged him in any way, or are on such bad terms with him as would make you come before God with a burden on your conscience], leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Christ does not for a moment hint that if we make such a discovery, we are to keep away from the altar. He says, rather, Go and get rid of this that makes you unworthy. And be in haste about it. Do not delay.

Do not loiter. "Agree with thine adversary quickly." Christ does not say, Let the matter drop. He says, Settle the difficulty. Get rid of the sin. Put away the obstacle. Then come and offer thy gift.

The trouble with the average Churchman to-day is that "his religion carries no atmosphere, no courage, no conviction; it is hesitating, impotent, unsaving." Men have made the Church so much less than Christ meant it to be. In the words of a friendly critic, "Church people have failed to reach the masses because of the passivity, drowsy devotion, and blind obedience which they ignorantly think is religion. They indulge in public worship to secure promises and favors, not in order that they may get to God to become better and more active men and women in life." [2]

Yes, yes, yes. But, ah! it is so much easier to criticize than to correct. Impotent as the Church is, the remedy does not lie in abandoning Christ's ideal. It lies in seeking loving fellowship with all who wish to embody His ideal. To help the Church to fulfil its mission is a better thing than to stand outside and complain. Whatever its faults, it is still the chief institution in the world that labors persistently and definitely for righteousness. If it does not stand for all that you would like to have it represent, it is your business to get inside and make it rise to new ideals.

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[2] Adderley: *The Creed and Real Life.*

XIV.

CHOOSING A CHURCH

WE have seen that Christ founded a Church, which is the nucleus of His kingdom—the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Heaven. The Church is Christ's plan of redemption, not man's attempted improvement on His plan. To enter its membership, therefore, is to act in accordance with the mind of the Master. We ought to belong to *some* religious communion.

But which one? How shall we choose a Church? There are many denominations, all claiming to be Christian Churches: how shall we decide their claims? how shall we know which is the best? how can we make up our minds which to join? That is the second serious question, then, that we are bound to face: how to choose a Church.

We are all acquainted with the ordinary way of deciding the matter. A man goes where his friends go, or where the members of the congregation are most congenial. He joins the same Church of which his parents were members. Or he goes where the service and the music are most to his taste. Or he iden-

tifies himself with some congregation whose pastor pleases him, or where the preaching is most acceptable. Or worst of all—though he does not confess this as his motive, and perhaps is hardly aware of it himself even—he goes where he and his family will gain social standing and secure an introduction into certain exclusive circles.

In one of these various ways, having once made up his mind to belong to a Church, he decides on the one that shall be his choice. After all, he says, it doesn't really make much difference where I go. The Churches are all moving toward the same goal and working with the same end in view. There are many religious roads, but they all lead heavenward, and it hardly matters much in which one I make my start.

So, perhaps, you who read this have been accustomed to talk yourself. But if you will stop a moment to reconsider the matter, you will find that this question of Church membership is a much more serious thing than that.

It must be plain to you, if you think about it at all, that if Christ really founded a Church, the one right way to decide which body we shall join is to try as best we can to find out which is the Church that Christ established. It may involve considerable study on our part; it may lead to much searching of heart and much examination of the foundations of our belief; it may lead us to lay aside certain opinions that we have imbibed almost from infancy; it may shatter old and dear relationships—but nevertheless, since this is the greatest question in life we shall ever have

to decide, it should be settled in all seriousness and earnestness, at no matter what expense of time and thought. The spiritual things are the most important things in the world, our relations with God are more to be considered than any relations with men, and since the choosing of a Church involves our whole spiritual development and will affect our whole life with God, it should not be settled lightly and carelessly.

If we have decided to belong to a Church, then, and if we have so decided because we believe it to be in accordance with the expressed desire of Christ, the only right way to make our choice among the many Christian bodies that claim to spring from Him is to try to learn which, in its doctrines, government, and worship, is most like the Church Christ founded. We must ask which resembles the primitive Church, in doctrine unchanged from what the apostles taught and practised; which has a Church polity such as we find among the first Christians; which has a Church worship such as the study of the Bible and of history would show to be like that of the first ages of the Church's life.

It may be that we shall never be able to decide all this, or it may be that we shall make a wrong decision —but at least we can try to find out the truth, at least we can enter upon the study with that seriousness which the subject demands. Then, if we have done all in our power to discover "which Church is right", and have failed, we shall not be blamed.

Just at this point we hear some one say that in such a search we are foredoomed to failure. With scores, and even hundreds, of denominations asserting that there we shall find the pure Church of Christ, it will be impossible to decide with any certainty among their conflicting claims. That is where the thoughtful, well-grounded Churchman disagrees with you. He is a Churchman by conviction and he believes you *can* decide, and can decide with no book but the Bible in your hand.

Let us take our Bibles, then, imagine yourselves among some of the scenes described in its pages, and try to see what the primitive Church was like. In this examination of Scripture we must ask you, however, to remember one thing: that in the case of any dispute over the meaning of a passage, we can learn which is the true view by consulting the early fathers of the Church. What did they think the passage meant? What, in the early, undisputed general councils, did they say about Church doctrine? In their opinions we have the interpretation of the men who came immediately after the time of Christ and His apostles, as to what the Bible teaching means—just as if, for example, in the interpreting of one of Lincoln's speeches, we could have the opinion of Nicolay or Hay, or the personal recollection of some one who had known Lincoln or at least was well acquainted with those who did know him.

With Bible in hand, then, and with this warning in mind, let us try to see what the primitive Church was.

(1) We are in Ephesus, and we hear that the great apostle St. Paul is coming to the city. We join the crowds of people who are going to hear him preach. Among them are some men who press forward to converse with him. "We have heard," they say, "of what you told the jailor at Philippi; and many others have received the same words, so full of comfort. We remember that you said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' And we do believe. We have heard of His wonderful life, of His death for us, of His glorious resurrection. We believe in Him as the Son of God."

So they speak, and St. Paul looks at them, and asks: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They are puzzled. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." And now it is St. Paul's turn to be astonished. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" he asks; and they say, "Unto John's baptism."

"Ah," says the great apostle, "John but baptized with the baptism of repentance. His was an act whereby men, openly confessing their sins, took their place among those who looked for the coming redemption. As he baptized the people, he said to them that they should believe on Him who should come after, that is, on Jesus Christ. His baptism brought no new grace of life; that must come from Him whose forerunner John was, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (So we must understand the brief report of the apostle's words given us in the Acts.) And "when they heard this, they were

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." [1]

So we see that with St. Paul something must follow belief in Christ: the believer must be baptized, and then apostolic hands must be laid upon him, that he may receive the Holy Ghost.

(2) But was that the general practice?

We go back a few years, and now we are in Samaria. St. Philip is preaching there, and when the people believe him thus "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ," what happens? "They were baptized, both men and women."

But is that all? Does he not put his hands upon them, as did St. Paul with the Ephesian converts? No, apparently not. Ah, wait! It is not St. Philip who "confirms" them, but the gift is to be theirs nevertheless. "When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." [2]

So, after all, the same course was followed here. First, baptism; then what we now call confirmation,

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[1] Acts of the Apostles, xix. 1-6.
[2] Acts of the Apostles, viii. 12-17.

the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost in all His fulness.

(3) But why did not St. Philip confirm? If he baptized, why must an apostle be sent for the second rite?

Well, we go back a little further, to see who St. Philip was. It is in Jerusalem, and among the early Christians there have been disputes over the administration of the charitable funds—for these early Christians were not perfect, you see, any more than are the later ones. But now the dispute has been settled, and seven men are selected for ordination at the apostles' hands into a lower order of the ministry.[8] Philip is among these, and, as we see, his ordination gives him certain powers. He preaches; he baptizes; but he is not of the apostolic order, he is only a deacon, and so he does not confirm or ordain.

(4) So you say: Now I see it all. There were these deacons and others like them, I suppose, who afterward formed the ministry of the Church; but when the apostles died their gifts died with them, and that is the reason so many do not believe in confirmation to-day: those who could give the Holy Spirit are no longer among us.

Wait a moment! There were not these two orders of the ministry only; there were three.

We are in one of the Eastern cities, and we meet a Christian who has with him copies of St. Paul's epistles to the different Churches which He founded.

[8] Acts of the Apostles, vi. 1-6.

Here is the one to the Philippian Church. St. Paul joins St. Timothy with him, and then we find from his salutation that there are two other orders of the ministry besides, making three in all: "To all the saints which are at Philippi," he says, "with the bishops and deacons."[4] There are other epistles, too, and in them we read of presbyters (sometimes called bishops), as well as deacons. St. Titus is bidden by St. Paul to ordain them in every city (Titus i. 5); St. Timothy is given charge concerning them (I. Tim. v. 17); and in one of St. Peter's epistles also (I. Peter v. 1) we find him exhorting the elders or presbyters. Moreover, these elders, like the deacons, are evidently *of the clergy,* not merely specially appointed laymen.

Nor does the office of the apostles cease with themselves. Not to prolong the subject further, we should find, if we had the Greek originals of the New Testament in our hands, the following list of those who are expressly called apostles, in addition to the Twelve: Matthias, chosen by lot to be of their number; Paul, "an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ," James, whom tradition names as the first Bishop of Jerusalem, Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Titus, Silas, and Luke. "Moreover, they are seen doing the same work as the Twelve. For example, history and tradition bear witness to the fact that the Apostle Timothy was the first Bishop of Ephesus, and the Apostle

[4] Philippians i. 1.

Titus the first Bishop of Crete, being ordained and appointed thereto by the Apostle Paul. The Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus not only accord with this statement, but are irreconcilably absurd on any other supposition; for they show that these men were left by St. Paul not only with power to do such things as all presbyters could do, but also to *superintend* the whole work of the Church in their respective jurisdictions—to give order concerning the doctrine which the presbyters were to preach; to rectify all deficiencies; to *ordain* presbyters in all the cities; to examine into the qualifications of all candidates for the priesthood and the diaconate, being careful to *lay hands* suddenly on no man. . . . And whence came all this authority and power? St. Paul tells us, for he says to his 'Son Timothy', 'Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.' "

Yes—there were three orders of the ministry, deacons, presbyters, and apostles; and the apostolic office is carried on to the successors of the original Twelve. Why the name "bishop" afterward came to be restricted to them we cannot now stop to explain.

(5) Well, you say, now we have the whole sum and substance of Christianity. I must be a follower of Christ, baptized in His Name, and by the laying on of apostolic hands I must receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Again, wait a bit! There is something more. If we are still, in imagination, to company with these early Christians, we shall find that they meet for worship. They "continue steadfastly in the apostles'

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." And this worship, at first daily, is always the special feature of Sunday. We are at Troas, when St. Paul preaches, and it is on "the first day of the week" that "the disciples came together to break bread." [5]

Moreover, the worship is liturgical: it consists of "the prayers"—that is the usual, well-known, set forms of prayer, not prayer generally.

And what was the worship? It was "the breaking of the bread"—in other words, the Holy Communion —and it was, as we have seen, not a service to be held two or three times a year, but every "first day of the week".

And how was it regarded? Did these early Christians consider it a mere memorial feast? Not so. If we still hold in our hands those epistles of the great St. Paul, we find that he believed that in this service the Lord Christ was really present. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them how the Eucharist was instituted, and then warns them in solemn words to be careful to communicate only after due and worthy preparation; for "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." Why? Because "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body," — that is, not discerning the presence, though it is really and truly there.

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[5] **Acts of the Apostles, xx. 7.**

(6) So then, you say, we at last have the whole scheme of the Church. We shall do all this ourselves, and when our children are grown up we shall have them baptized, too.

But why wait? If we go into any of these early Christian assemblies we shall see not adults only, but we shall find baptized children there. St. Peter, when he urged the first converts to be baptized, said, "The promise is unto you, and your children"; St. Paul, writing to those who were members of the Church, addresses children as well as adults; and we hear that whole families and households have been baptized—among whom, surely, there were children.*

(7) And now, you say, all is clear. We have found the Church, we have entered its fold and received its gifts of grace. Here we will stay, free from sin, so long as life remains.

Alas, some day temptation proves too great, and you fall, and fall grievously. You ask pardon of God, but there comes no comfort to your soul; you are weak, and you sin again, and with this fresh error staring you in the face, you fear that God will not forgive you. As you are thus troubled, weary and heavy laden, you meet St. John. He hears your sad tale, lifts his hands over you, blesses you, and bids you depart in peace. For you are forgiven, he says; you need not doubt it; my words, as I speak them by authority of God, bring you the blessed assurance.

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* Acts of the Apostles, ii. 38-39; Ephesians vi. 1; Colossians iii. 20; Acts xvi. 15, 33; I Cor. i. 16.

Did not our Lord Himself give us this power? Did not He say, as He breathed on us, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"?

(8) So, as you depart in blessed peace and calm, you think of the angelic face of the saintly Apostle, and you say, Surely, surely here I have the Church's head, here is the father of all the faithful. Another, however, remembers the marvellous labors of the wonderful Apostle to the Gentiles, and interrupts you, No, St. Paul is the head of the Church. And yet another, No, it is St. Peter: to him the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.

As we dispute, there enters one who attended the first council of the Church at Jerusalem.[1] He tells us that none of these presided at the council, but that its president was St. James, not of the original Twelve; he says that the apostles, elders, and brethren (the bishops, clergy, and laity) there came together; he tells us how, many years later, St. Paul withstood St. Peter face to face; in many ways he makes us understand that the apostles were equals, members of a college, or body, and that the head of the Church is neither St. Peter, nor St. Paul, nor St. John—its Head is our Risen Lord, the Lord Christ who rules it from His throne in heaven.

So you have the picture of the primitive Church.

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[1] **Acts of the Apostles, xv. 1-31.**

What body, of all the Christian communions about us, resembles it?

You have seen what its characteristics are: Entrance is by baptism for young and old; then comes confirmation, the laying on of hands for the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost, and always by an apostle or his successor; then Holy Communion, celebrated, not two or three times a year, but every Lord's Day; then, if the soul requires it, absolution by a duly commissioned ambassador of God; there is a liturgical worship, as we should expect with those accustomed to the prayers of the synagogue and the elaborate ritual of the temple; there is a threefold ministry, of apostolic origin — threefold, as the ministry of the Jews (High-priest, Priest, and Levite) would foreshadow.

What modern communion is most like the picture? Surely not the Roman. Apostolic it is; we cannot deny that it is a branch of the One, Catholic Church. But where, in this picture of primitive Christianity, do you find an infallible Pope? Where do you find bishops degraded to be merely the local agents of a Pope? Where do you see the mutilated sacrament? Where compulsory confession? Where the excessive reverence of the saints? Where the cultus of the Virgin Mary, her elevation from the chief place among saints (which is undoubtedly hers) to the position of Queen of Heaven and Chief Intercessor, through whom special access to God is to be had?

Nor does the picture find its counterpart in the modern denominations. With them we do not find

the threefold ministry, the apostolic order, the frequent communion, the high regard for the sacraments, the unvarying insistence on baptism, and the unfailing faith in the eucharistic presence. There we have no confirmation, no belief in the ministerial function of blessing and absolving, no dignity of worship.

When therefore you ask the Episcopalian who has been mentioned, why he belongs to his Church, his answer will run something like this: I am a Bible Christian. Because I am a Bible Christian I am an Episcopalian, a Catholic Churchman. Because I am a Bible Christian, I am an American Catholic, not a Roman Catholic. Because I am a Bible Christian, I must belong to some Church, and I choose this because it seems to me to be not only American and Catholic (or primitive) but Biblical and Evangelical. When I came into the Episcopal Church, I believe I came into the Church of Christ and His Apostles.

XV.

THE EXTENSION OF THE INCARNATION

AT heart the men of to-day are at least as good as their predecessors of earlier days and if they are not found in their places in church on Sunday, it is more often than not because no plain, definite reason has been given why they should be there. We are to disabuse our minds of the idea that men and women stay away from church because they have no religion. They stay away because, for the most part, the matter has not been presented to them strongly on the divine side. Their idea of the Church is that it rests on very much the same level as a fraternal society. They think of it as an institution for inculcating moral teaching, and if they do not identify themselves with it, the reason will often be found in the fact that they have no higher conception of it than this fraternal and social one. Possibly this is especially true of men. They think of the Church, when they think of it at all, as a large association doing, in its way, very much what other fraternal associations do; an organization that is very good in its general scope, but is quite unnecessary for them.

They like to have their wives go to church, they wish their children to go to Sunday school, and they themselves will attend some service occasionally, but they do not regard the Church as having anything in essence greater than what a lodge would give them.

What we need, therefore, is to show them clearly and emphatically the real difference between the Church and all other organizations. They discuss the Church now as a society; regard various denominations as they would look at different fraternal associations, and would choose one or the other, just as they would choose the Masons rather than the Odd Fellows, or the Knights of Pythias rather than the American Mechanics, or the Royal Arcanum rather than either. We must show them that it is something more than a human society. One thing differentiates it from every other organization, *it is a home of grace.* Various societies show men what is good and right and true; the Church does this, too. It is not merely that the Church does it better than they can; the Church is the repository of God's grace to *enable them to do* what other societies can only point out and recommend. In other words, the Church must be presented, not occasionally but constantly, as a divine organism, not a human society; as the Body of Christ, full of His life, offering us divine strength and help, giving men grace to do what conscience points out as their duty.

"Gospel means good news, not good advice." The Church is here, not merely to give us fair counsels, to teach us that this thing or the other is right

and this or the other wrong, not simply to tell men that they should be more unselfish and more thoughtful of their brethren, or even to give them a satisfactory form of worship and so lift up their hearts to God. All this the Church can do and do much better than any of the human organizations that men allow to take her place, but the Gospel, as we all know, is much more than this; it is the good news of the Incarnate God, who suffered and died for us, has given us the great model of all living, and now abides in His Church, filling it with His own divine life, animating it through His Spirit, bringing its members into contact with Himself, and so providing them with that constant supply of grace, by which and by which alone they can follow in His steps.

To make this perfectly clear we need to reiterate some things that have been said before. Man, we have seen, is a fallen creature; he was meant for better things. God the Son has come to lift him up once more into the beauty of holiness, that dignity of true humanity for which he was made. How, then, does our Lord accomplish this? Our hope in Christ, we may answer, lies in this: not merely that in Him we have a perfect example, nor that His death redeems us from sin, but that with sin forgiven and a fresh start made possible, something more should still be done, our corrupted nature must be continually cleansed and renewed by the communication of Christ's life to us. The sacrifice of the cross has given remission of sins, the life of Christ is a model

on which we are to build the new life, but that life is to be His life within us.

Not long since, in a railroad accident, a young man was terribly scalded. For months he lay in an hospital suffering intense agony. He had been so badly burned that the flesh would not heal again fresh and clean. Finally the physicians announced that it would be necessary to graft new and healthy skin upon the scalded members. Friends of the sick man offered their help, and hundreds of small pieces of skin taken from their bodies were grown on the injured parts of the maimed body of their comrade, until finally the wounds healed and the man was discharged cured. Now something similar to this must be done to heal the sickness of men's souls. We are to be taken into Christ, joined to Him, so that, as it were, His flesh and ours come in touch and in that union the health and cleansing strength of His own perfect humanity are given to us. We are to be brought into direct contact with our Lord, a relation so close that our nature is sanctified in Him. So He Himself tells us that He is the vine and we are the branches: as the sap flows from the trunk out into the branch, so the life of Christ is to flow out into our souls, till the strength that is His becomes ours, and we are once more full of spiritual energy and power.

How is this to be effected? It will be seen now why we insist upon the Church's place in the scheme of redemption: it is because St. Paul tells us that there we are brought into this close and intimate relationship with Christ. The Church, he tells us,

is the very Body of Christ, and by baptism we are brought into that Body, made members of it, in as vital a relation with its divine Head as are the members of the human body with the soul that gives it life.

The Church is the Body of Christ. We shall see what it means, perhaps, if we ask what our own bodies are to us. The body is but the expression of the life within. Soul and body are united in the closest possible relation, so that the outer frame reveals the inner spirit, the soul that lies behind it. What a mirror of the soul the face is, for example! The saint generally looks the saint; the sensual or worldly man often betrays his true character in every feature of his countenance. Now the Church is the Body of Christ: therefore those who are members of this Body are in as real a relation to Him as are the members of the human frame to the living soul that indwells and controls it. When our Lord works His will upon men, He does it by joining them to Himself, making their life a part of His own, and bringing them into union with Himself in a divine organism.

That is part of what we mean when we repeat the familiar statement that the Church is the extension of the Incarnation. Just as, at the Incarnation, the Son of God took a body to Himself and in that was seen and known of men, so that they might actually come into touch with Him and in the contact of every-day life place themselves under His influence, so the Church of God now is an organism full of Christ's life, its members parts of a body so closely united to

Him that they are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh—members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, as St. Paul puts it—a body in which His life flows in sacramental grace, so that by means of its sacred ordinances we may come into closer relation with Him than did those who looked into His face, touched His hands, and reverently knelt at His feet when He was here visibly among men. There is a grandeur and richness in this conception that puts to shame that thought of the Church which makes it merely a collection of believers, a gathering together of those who are trying to follow Christ. We are more than that, we are members of our Lord, joined to Him by invisible bonds.

Moreover, this union is not something that we can bring about by an act of our own; it is effected by our Lord Himself, through the conferring upon us of a new life. The gift is so great that we speak of it as nothing less than a re-birth in Him. St. Paul says that we are actually buried in Christ, and out of this burial rise into a new life in His nature. In baptism we "put on" Christ. The change is like the grafting of a branch into the vine, like the transplanting of a seed from a soil in which it could not germinate into one from which it can draw sustenance and bud and bear fruit.

If we can succeed in impressing men with this idea of the Church, we shall surely win them to her fold. That many hold themselves aloof from organized Christianity is not, we are sure, a sign that they are irreligious. It is merely an indication of our

failure to show that the Church is a matter of vital necessity, because it is a household of grace into which men come through the sacrament of life and in which they are strengthened by the food of the soul.

There are one or two simple truths springing out of this thought of the Church as the Body of Christ which especially need to be emphasized.

(1) We should never forget, for example, that *all* baptized persons are members of the Church of Christ. It is surely of value to insist upon this in a day when the visible unity of the Church is broken. After all, despite our unhappy divisions, there is here the germ of a fuller unity. All who are baptized, whether they be Greeks, Romans, Anglicans, or Protestants, are members of the Body of Christ. They may not live a true life of fellowship, they may in various ways hinder the completeness of their union with Christ, their Head, but their membership remains, nevertheless; it can never, while life lasts, be wholly lost; it may always, by grace like that which first produced it, be restored and perfected. Here is a bond which we all recognize in theory. If we would once take it as a basis of practical action, it might prove of help to a broader and more charitable effort toward reunion. With Episcopalians there are some who pray for corporate reunion with Rome and the East; there are others whose love goes out to the thousands of Protestants about us, friends, neighbors, relatives; but how few there are who remember that we are all brethren, who have, therefore, the kindly

sympathy and ready understanding to work for a closer unity on both sides!

Yet all are members of the one Body. The Catholic Church is not this or that apostolically organized branch, nor all of them together, but the entire body of baptized believers. Of these some, indeed, may have partially severed their connection with Christ, by sin or schism; some may have failed to carry out their union with Him to its full completeness; but all are members, even though by their separation from the apostolic order they may have missed something of the continued flowing of the life of Christ that ever renews itself in the Body. My own body has many members and in some of them the circulation may be impeded, so that they have partly lost their strength, but they are members for all that and the body would be but a maimed and incomplete thing, if because they are weak they were to be cut off. This does not mean that every society of Christian people is a true branch of the apostolic Church. The *organization* of the Catholic Church is that which is administered by bishops who are charged with our Lord's commission; but its *membership* includes all who are baptized in the Triune Name of God.

(2) Again, it is this thought of our individual membership in Christ that makes the conception of the Church just set forth of such practical personal importance. If we are members of Christ, the fact is full of the deepest possible meaning. Every separate member of my body has its use; the body would not be complete without it, could not do its work

perfectly if deprived of it. To cut off any single member would be to maim and disfigure the whole. In like manner (we may say it reverently) each one of us is necessary in our Lord's Body; He has for each one his special place and his special work; He uses us, the least, the poorest, the meanest, the weakest of us. Each has his individual work. No one else can do it as he can, for he was made for it and if he does not accept the task possibly it will never be done at all.

We do this work with a strength other than our own. I move my finger; back of it is my hand, my arm, the power of my body, the entire force of my will. So it is with us in our union with Christ. Are we trying to do something for Him and for our fellows? Well, back of our weak little effort is the Church's strength, back of that the will of our Lord Himself. We are working for Him, we sometimes say; rather, He is working through us. All of His strength is back of our small endeavor; all of His will behind us, all of His energy moving us on. We can never fail. We have only to surrender ourselves to Him, make ourselves His instruments, and things are sure to come out right. One who is baptized into the Body of Christ's Church "finds himself encircled by a power of inexhaustible strength and grace, in the might of whose everlasting glory he may forever and ever be quickened by undying fires, and renewed, and replenished, and reinvigorated by the ever new and ever increasing splendor of a life that can never fade, or diminish, or slacken, or fail." [1]

[1] H. S. Holland: *Logic and Life.*

(3) We must be on our guard, however, against making this conception of the Church a mechanical one. No gifts of grace are ever effective independently of our use of them. Though we are incorporated into Christ as members of His body, we must, each for himself, use the grace that flows in the body, or our privilege has but put us in worse condition than before. Without that lively faith which enables the soul to grow on what it has received, we are as if the hand were bound up, the branch of the vine cut away. What are we, except this faith keep us ever abiding in Christ? Lifeless, senseless, helpless clay—energized and quickened into a body, then, only as we breathe of His Spirit and so take in His life. Let us, therefore, as we praise Him for the gift of His grace, pray that its flow within us may never slacken, or the torpor of its sloth creep over us; that His warm life blood may drive away the chill of unfaithfulness, its pulsating strength ever rouse and quicken us. We are members of Christ's body; God grant that we may never fall away and wither and die!

XVI.

THE INCARNATION APPLIED

ALL men fell in Adam and the Incarnation of God the Son is to effect their redemption. This our Lord accomplishes through His Church, which is the extension of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ, left here in the world to manifest His life and show forth His death till He come. In this Church we come into spiritual contact with our Lord, we are knit up into His sacred humanity and are brought into as close a union with Him as that which joins a body and its members, a vine and its branches.

We read certain passages of the Bible which tell us of this relation of Christ and His people and their mysterious language of promise is so rich and deep that it is impossible to exhaust the fulness of the meaning. Yet, wonderful as the promises are, the truth is so hard for us to understand and realize. We fall so short of what it seems to imply. Glimpses of heaven open to us and then we fall back to earth again, the soaring spirit held down by the flesh. Yes, we say, all this may be possible, but how can I believe that it has happened to *me?* What do I know, what

can I know, of such heights of communion, such fulness of divine fellowship? I have never felt that all this has come to me; the promises are beautiful ones, but so far as I am concerned they are unrealized ideals.

Just here comes the sacramental system of the Church as a help to our appreciating the truth of this communion with God. Yes, it tells us, there is such a life of fellowship. God's grace is here for us and here in such fashion that we may indeed come in touch with it, thrill with it, as the wire quivers under the electric current, and the branch throbs with the inflowing sap, as the body is quickened and vivified by the pulsating blood. There is such a life, there are such gifts of grace. They come in such a way that we have absolute testimony of their reality. God knows our weakness, knows how we are bound down by what is earthly and material. We are not disembodied spirits, we are here in the flesh, with all the drawbacks of the flesh, and so when God brings us this grace He brings it through sensible channels. He ties up spiritual things and material, so to speak. There is always something we can see, touch, taste, handle. Faith is stimulated by sense and we can believe because there is something on which belief can rest, which it can grasp and hold. So, for us there need be no fears about the indwelling of the divine nature in us. We know we have been born again, because we have submitted to that ordinance which is the means of admission into the power of Christ's risen life. There need be no anxiety as

to whether we have gone through certain profound experiences, we know when it all happened; the life is ours and it only remains for us to appropriate and use it. We know, too, that there was a time when the fulness of the Spirit became ours, because at a certain moment that was done for us which is the ordained means of His coming to men. We know that we have Christ within us, in all His power; in Holy Communion we have the outward sign, the thing that the eyes can see and the hands touch, the outward sign as the pledge and assurance of the inward grace.

Now, notice: this does not do away with faith, or take its place. We need faith; it is the great necessity, that personal knowledge of our Lord, that individual apprehension of Him. We need grace also and when grace is offered it is the part of faith to appropriate and use it. People sometimes argue against sacramental doctrine as if a sacrament were regarded by Churchmen as a kind of magical charm, bestowing grace by the mere fact of its being administered. "How can you suppose," they will ask, "that a mere ceremony can bring me any grace? Do not the facts prove the very opposite? I see so many baptized people still living in sin: how, then, can you say that baptism brings a new gift of life? How can you believe that confirmation is a bestowal of the Holy Ghost, when confirmed people so often fail to manifest in their lives the gifts of the Spirit? How can you believe that we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion, when it is plain to anyone who will give the matter a thought, that

the most regular communicants are often far less worthy Christians than those who rarely attend church and are never seen at the altar?"

The answer is the same that was given in the last chapter. The gifts of God are spiritual and therefore should never be regarded as mechanical operations. Faith and grace are related and "while the sacraments actually convey to us the food of the soul, a gift given from without, they do us no good unless there be a spirit within us awake to what is being given, welcoming the gift and ready to assimilate or digest it into our spiritual system" just as common bread cannot nourish us or do us any good, unless it be eaten with appetite and assimilated and digested.

The point made here is, that possibly grace is brought to us by sacramental means, so that the two may react upon each other. The faith which accepts grace is in turn aided and stimulated by the means through which grace is given. This, because the sacraments are "plain and visible tokens, whereby we may know what we cannot see." Over and over again, in His miracles, our Lord used material means—His own body, His hands, His garments, the common clay, the water of Siloam—for the conveying of a healing gift. Just because such means were used the faith of men was more easily aroused. In like manner we, now, find our faith quickened by the fact that spiritual things are linked with material, the presence of the supernatural revealed by its union with the natural.

There is no picture of Christ more full of tender memories and associations than that which shows Him as the Good Physician who went about the fields and hills of Galilee restoring into harmony with the beautiful world about Him the disease-laden bodies of the multitudes of sick folk who came to Him for help. He was known as the Healer by most of those who first crowded to see Him. Many miracles of wonder-working power are ascribed to the Divine Healer. Whatever difficulties the miracles present, or however we explain them, the record of Christ's gracious deeds runs so closely through the gospel narrative that it is like a thread woven into cloth which cannot be cut out without destroying the garment.

Everywhere the Master's group of disciples went with Him on His errands of mercy and watched Him at His work. They were like students in a clinic with eyes fixed on the busy surgeon.

One remarkable thing they learned as they watched the Great Healer: Instead of healing all His patients by wholesale and by a word of power, He took them one by one and—we need to fix our attention on this—as each individual came for treatment some material agency was used in the accomplishment of the cure. It would be interesting to consider each of our Lord's miracles, and observe the carrying out of the same principle. It is sufficient, however, to say that in only five out of twenty-two recorded cases of miraculous healing does He dispense with material means. Once, for example, there was brought to Him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.

In order to work a cure He need not, of course, do more than speak the word of divine command; but we read that "He took him aside from the multitude, put His fingers in his ears, and spit and touched his tongue." [1]

All this was a sacramental action; there were the outward signs of the divine power at work within; there was that which enabled the man to feel that something was being done for him, something he could see; the needed faith was called forth, and faith being expectant and receptive took the Healer at His word and the cure was effected.

So, then, faith is needed, and sacraments are needed, too. Sacraments are the means by which grace comes to us. Faith is the assimilative power of the soul which enables us to make use of the grace. St. Paul joined both together. No one could insist more strenuously than did he on the absolute necessity of faith; no one, on the other hand, could state more clearly the sacramental doctrine, as when he speaks of the "laver of regeneration" in baptism, of the bestowal of the Holy Ghost in the laying on of hands, of the presence and power of Christ in the Holy Communion. No one could show more plainly the union of the two things, faith and grace, than the great apostle when he says, "We have access by faith into this grace."

What we have just seen of our Lord's method of

[1] See my *Back to Christ*.

healing is surely a complete answer to that disposition which fancies that the spiritual and the material must be set in opposition, the one against the other, as though they were naturally and inevitably incompatible. All that we see of human life teaches us the contrary. When we find soul and body influencing, and influenced by, each other, we should be more than surprised if the material were not associated with the spiritual in the redemption of those who exhibit this twofold nature and our astonishment would increase at the remembrance that the whole process of redemption rests upon the principle of the Incarnation, of God made flesh, the spiritual possessing and filling the material beyond all power of conception.

Along this line of thought, does it not occur to us at once that the plan of redemption involves of necessity, as of the very fitness of things, the employment of material means for spiritual ends? Our bodies are to be redeemed as well as our souls; they also are to rise into newness of life; and so that which is employed in their redemption is one in kind with them. We may go further, and add that not only are our bodies to be redeemed, but the whole material creation, of which we are a part, is to be lifted up with us into heavenly places. Through our bodies we are united with the world about us. When man fell, therefore, nature fell with him and became "subject to vanity," and when man rises again the whole creation will be raised with him. It may be, then, that God uses the things of nature as agencies by which His life is brought to us, because in so doing He joins

earthly things in the redemption of man, the head and representative of nature. This, at least, seems to be St. Paul's meaning, when he tells us that "the whole creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

If this view be true, it lifts the sacramental system out of the realm of mere congruity and adaptation to circumstance, and traces its origin back to eternal fitness and necessity. The thought has breadth and grandeur, asserting as it does the worth and dignity of the body, declaring it to be a sharer with the soul in redemption, predicting its survival and future development in a higher state, drawing on the material world for help and using as instrumental means for spiritual ends things below the intellectual order, whereby that race shall be aided in whose recovery nature herself has an interest and a direct concern.[2]

At any rate, we see that the Church's doctrine meets perfectly man's need and corresponds exactly with his nature. Nor does it in any way suggest the unexpected or the unusual. Why should not grace come by sacramental means? Is not man himself a sacrament: his body the outward and visible sign of the inner spirit? Is not the world, indeed, the greatest of all sacraments: suggesting through the senses the divine life that lies behind its material manifesta-

[2] Dix: *The Sacramental System*, lecture i.

tions? Nay, as man's spirit is so closely related to his body, is not the whole spiritual world in like manner just as near the material? Need it be surprising that the water of baptism, the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, should but veil and hide a presence and power within? Is not this, in truth, exactly what lies before us every time we turn our eyes upon the wonders of God's natural creation? Everything visible in the world expresses some spiritual meaning and contains some spiritual force. All nature is sacramental. "Human science and Holy Scripture unite their voices in teaching us that beneath the world of sense, penetrating and vivifying it, there is a world of spirit; that what we see and touch is but the crust and shell, the outward and visible sign of unseen realities, truly present, though sense cannot perceive them".[3]

Two worlds are ours, 'tis only sin
  Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within
  Clear as the sea and sky.

[3] MacColl: *The Reformation Settlement*, chapter v.

XVII.

THE BAPTISMAL GIFT

EXCEPT a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. There must be an entirely new beginning. No principle can bring forth results greater in kind than itself. If spiritual things are to be attained, there must be a vital connection with the source of spiritual energy. This is what baptism gives us. It does not at once accomplish everything, we must work out our own salvation; but it gives us the new principle, the impetus, the fresh start.

The might of beginnings! Evolution has made us familiar with the thought. The world did not come full grown from the hand of the Creator. It began in embryo and has since developed its numberless forms of life. What a wonderful beginning was that, when the first vital spark touched that cell of matter ages ago and it began to thrill and swell with the God-given energy then imparted to it! There was the origin of all life, the grass and the trees and the flowers, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, the living creatures of the earth, man himself with all his later development. No step has ever equalled this

one, from a dead world to the world a moment after, palpitating with the first current of life. Without that vital spark from God all the rest could never have been.

When creation had reached its climax in man, there was another beginning. God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul, differentiated from the rest of creation by the fact that he had a spiritual nature, a life moulded after the image of God. It was only a beginning, yet how wonderful the step, how great the advance from brute to man!

Now that man has sinned and must be brought back to God, there is another creation, a new beginning once more. The old nature is not to be patched up and made over, a new one must come into being. There must be planted the germ of a higher life, a seed left indeed to develop, yet without which there can be no advancement. Only a new beginning, but think of the might of it! The impetus has been given. The wonder of that new birth is greater than all the growth that must yet come before we have attained to the beauty of holiness. Whatever the future may bring forth, it is this new life principle which is the important thing. With that all the rest is possible, all is there in embryo; without it nothing can be accomplished.

The wonder of baptism, then, is that it is a new point of departure, a regeneration, a second birth. As such, it includes pardon, the wiping out of the

past; grace, the seed of the new life; light, the illumination of the soul for its progress in holiness.

(1) Forgiveness—the cleansing from the burden of sin.

Baptism is the means by which our Lord seals to us His pardon. When we turn to the New Testament we find it full of the promise of remission of sins through this sacrament. St. Peter tells the multitude who had been convinced by his preaching to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins" (Acts ii. 38). Ananias brings the command to the penitent Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16). St. Paul tells us that Christ cleanses the Church by "the washing of water" (Eph. v. 25-26). He reminds the Corinthians, "But ye have been washed, ye have been sanctified" (I Cor. vi. 11). In another place he speaks of the "washing [or laver] of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5). St. Peter says that "even baptism doth also now save us" (I St. Peter iii. 21). In all these texts we have as it were but the expansion of our Lord's own words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (St. Mark xvi. 16). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (St. Matthew xxviii. 19).

Repentance is not enough, nor conversion. If repentance is full and sincere, if conversion is thorough, their genuineness will be manifested in a simple-hearted, childlike reliance on our Lord's promise and

we shall come to receive pardon in His way. So St. Paul, stricken to the earth on the road to Damascus, deeply penitent, thoroughly converted, is not yet pardoned. "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," is the message Ananias brings him and he at once obeys.

In the second Book of the Kings there is a story full of dramatic interest and rich in its display of human nature. Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Syria, was a great soldier who stood high in the esteem of his sovereign. With all his riches and honors, however, his life was blasted; he was a leper. It is not necessary to go over the story in detail. We take it up at the point where Naaman stands at the door of the prophet of Israel, to whom he has been sent to be healed. "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan,

according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

One thing is very plain in the story. Naaman's cure was wrought by the power of God. There was no healing virtue in the water of the Jordan. God simply used it as the outward and visible means of conveying a healing strength from Himself. However simple and absurd the remedy might seem, Naaman must accept the cure in God's way and through the means which God had appointed. His acceptance of the means is the test of his earnestness and faith.

The story recites very simply by anticipation God's method of cleansing us from sin in baptism. If someone objects that what Jesus Christ wants is that we should believe on Him and give Him our hearts, we ask, How shall we show our belief except by submitting to the ordinance which He commanded as the means of our moral cure? It seems a very simple thing, this baptizing with water in the Triune Name; but to submit to it is to show our obedience, our faith, our earnestness.

The first effect of baptism, then, is remission of sins—not merely justification in the sense of acquittal, but a gift of absolution carrying with it the power to loose from evil and gird up the forces of the soul against the weakness of sin.

Sin, however, is not annihilated by the grace of baptism. It only receives its first blow, an assault that will eventually lead to its destruction. The sacra-

mental grace does not pluck up the roots of sin, it gradually kills them. There still remains, even in the baptized, the "infection of nature", so that the lust of the flesh continues to be felt. In spite of the glory attached to the baptized, they still "offend in many things" (St. James iii. 2) ; they must still "keep under the body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. ix. 27) ; they must be on their guard to "abstain from fleshly lusts" (I St. Peter ii. 11). Although their "fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ", there must still be a struggle against evil within them, for sin is still there. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I St. John i. 8).

(2) Regeneration.

Forgiveness is not all that is needed, there must be an entire renewal of the spirit. We must be reborn. We have only to look about us, in order to be convinced of that. No one who has ever contemplated the work that lies before those who would help and uplift their fellows can doubt it. Conscious of our own spiritual poverty, of our weakness of will and faintness of heart, of the moral evil that still lies unconquered within us, we see in others the same terrible sin and depravity. The worst of it is that a multitude of other souls are ushered into the world every day with the same dreadful heritage, children of the thief, the drunkard, the sensually debased, poor, degenerate, stunted souls, born with a burden of disease in the spirit that is worse than the inheritance of physical ill which often presses upon them.

What can possibly effect, with such, a permanent moral change? Education, culture, the force of example, the power of love, will do something, but it does seem that there must be a remedy going deeper still. The glory of the Christian Church is that she has that remedy. She has never lost hope, because she believes that all men can be given a new nature, that the old self can be thoroughly renewed through the application of the life of Jesus Christ Himself.

In baptism, then, there is not only a death unto sin but a new birth unto righteousness—an upward life of the soul which begins the moment it is incorporated into Christ. This much our Lord implies when He says, in a passage which all the Church fathers explain as referring to baptism, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5). The epistles confirm this interpretation of our Lord's words. St. Paul speaks of our being "saved by the washing of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5); he says that "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27); that "we have been buried with Him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God" (Col. ii. 12); that "we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans vi. 4).

Yet it must be remembered again that this new birth is only a beginning, a mighty beginning it is true, but only a start after all, and all that follows

must depend upon our use of the grace given. The baptized person is said to be born again, because he has been incorporated into Christ by the life-giving Spirit; yet through his neglect the life of the Spirit may never grow in him. Regeneration may be compared to the effect which comes over a seed when it has been placed in nourishing soil. Before it was placed there the seed had life, but it was practically dead until it had received the beneficial effects of that transplanting. Again, as in the seed death takes place as well as life, so regeneration is a death unto sin and then a new birth unto righteousness. Finally, as the birth of the seed must be followed by its growth and to that end it must have sunlight, moisture, and nourishment, so must regeneration, with the baptized, be followed by nurture in the Lord. We must not only be born again, we must grow in the new life; yet the growth can come only because of the vitality received at birth. The Church, when she baptizes, prays that "the old Adam may be *so buried* that the new man may be raised up", that "sinful affections may die", and "all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow".

The fact that baptized persons sometimes never consecrate themselves to God is no evidence against the reality of the baptismal grace. It but shows that the gift is not unconditional; the grace appears in power and activity only on certain conditions. Only the foundation of salvation is laid; we must build up on that by our personal faith. (See I St. Peter iii. 21.) One great argument for infant baptism is that

children cannot erect such barriers against the reception of grace as adults and therefore if the seed can be planted within them and through the care and attention of parents and sponsors given the chance of growth in early life, the little ones who have received this blessing are the less likely to fall into grievous sin and the more readily recovered if they do. "Adults may hinder or prevent the operation of grace by ignorance, by indifference, by want of due preparation; to their own part must they look, to their duty must they be urged by their spiritual guides; but the lot of the children is happier, and of such is the kingdom of heaven." [1]

(3) Illumination.

By this, power is given to the spiritual faculties, enabling them to discern spiritual things. We receive the Spirit, that we may know the things freely given us of God. We have the eyes of our understanding enlightened, that we may see and know the truth. Yet this spiritual vision is not perfected all at once. Like the blind man who was healed by our Lord and beheld men as trees walking, at first we do not see spiritual things in exact proportion; gradually the vision becomes more clear, and we see plainly.

From every aspect, then, baptism is the *beginning* of God's work with the soul. He works by evolution here, as He works in nature. God begins the new creation; man must carry it on in its later

[1] Dix: *The Sacramental System.*

development. His the original gift; ours the privilege and responsibility of using it. His the planting of the seed; ours the work of tending and watering it, until it bursts into bloom and brings forth fruit to perfection.

XVIII.

INFANT BAPTISM

SHOW me one sentence in the Bible which clearly and definitely enjoins the baptism of infants, and I will at once withdraw all opposition to the custom. But you cannot do this; you cannot point to a single passage as proof of your position. Some such challenge as this used to be made frequently by Baptists. The world changes. In these days too many people are absolutely indifferent about baptism, infant or adult, to make such a challenge. The whole subject, does it not, resolves itself into a question of revelation. Have we a divinely revealed religion or have we not? Once the authority of Scripture is recognized, as an actual unveiling of God's mind and purpose in redemption, there can be no question as to the importance of baptism. It will be the purpose of this chapter to show that scriptural authority for infant baptism is just as clear.

A fundamental error in his conception of the Bible is revealed in the challenge of our Baptist friend. In a later chapter it will be pointed out that the New Testament was not written to give men

their first knowledge of the principles and practices of Christianity. It was written for those who had already been instructed in the faith and had no need therefore of plain injunctions about fundamentals which were everywhere received. The Bible is not a book which is intended to give people their first ideas about the Christian religion. "All that people need to be taught first is assumed as already known, all, for example, that is contained in our Creed and Catechism. This is not taught, but referred to. The books of the New Testament were intended to remind men of what they already knew, to recall it to their minds, and to build them up in further knowledge of it."[1] One has only to glance at such texts as St. Luke i. 4; I Cor. xi. 2, 23; xv. 1-4; II St. Peter i. 12, and many others, to see plainly that this is so.

There are many things, therefore — and often things of the first importance—which we shall not find directly and explicitly stated in the Bible. The very things which were universally accepted and everywhere practised, which nobody denied or misunderstood and about which there was no dispute, would be the things the Scripture writers would not find themselves often called upon to mention. We must turn to Christian tradition to learn that the early Church practised these things. We shall expect only incidental references to them in Scripture, references that would not be satisfactory by themselves but are perfectly plain when read in the light of the Church's tradition.

[1] Gore: *The Creed of the Christian.*

To take an instance: there is no injunction in the New Testament to keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath, yet we find incidental references that prove the practice most conclusively; as, when we read that such and such a thing happened when the disciples were met together on the first day of the week, to break bread—a proof not only that the first day was kept, but an indication as to how it was observed, namely, by the celebration of the Holy Communion. Again, admitting the change from the Sabbath, there is no direct commandment that Sunday shall be kept by common public worship; all Christians knew that it should be so observed, and the practice was so general that only when some began to neglect it do we see any reference to the subject. Even then the incidental reference is stronger than a direct injunction, as when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."

So it is with infant baptism. A study of Christian tradition shows that it has always been practised in the Church; there never was a time, in the early days, when anybody dreamed of denying it. Under the old covenant infants had been admitted by circumcision to Church membership and naturally they were admitted under the new. There is no direct command about it in the New Testament writings, because it is assumed as already known and practised. It is both taken for granted and commanded in the New Testament that *all* persons are to be baptized, and unless one can produce a definite command

excluding infants from the rite it must be concluded that we should permit them to be partakers of it.

Now what do we find in Holy Scripture? (*i*) Our Lord, having shown His good will toward children (St. Mark x. 14), gave commandment to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them (St. Matthew xxviii. 19). (*ii*) In the first Christian sermon St. Peter says: "Repent and be baptized, for the promise is to you and to your children" (Acts ii. 38-39). (*iii*) There is record of the baptism of three entire households (Acts xvi. 15, 33; I. Cor. i. 16). (*iv*) In the epistles, addressed to baptized persons, children are exhorted, as well as adults (Ephesians vi. 1; Colossians iii. 20) as being Church members.

Considering, therefore, the custom of the Jewish Church, and adding to that the universal interpretation of the matter by the Christian Church, for fifteen centuries, those who deny infant baptism should show: (*i*) That Christ meant to exclude children; (*ii*) that St. Peter meant the same; (*iii*) that there were no children in the three households, where all were baptized; (*iv*) that the children addressed as Christians in St. Paul's epistles were not really baptized.

The truth is, the denial of infant baptism arises from a misunderstanding of the sacrament itself. People confound conversion and regeneration, and because they make conversion the only absolutely necessary thing and baptism a mere symbolic rite through which one professes that he has been converted, infants (as not having passed through this

experience) are denied the sacrament. The Church, however, has always taught that baptism is a new birth, that in it we are given the germ of a higher life, and that while with adults there must be a real turning to God to make this grace effectual, infants, as not being able to oppose any obstacle to the grace, may receive it and will find as years go on that it helps in that gradual turning of the soul to God which is just as true a conversion as is any sudden and violent change of heart in one who has been aroused from a life of deliberate sin against Him.

In other words, we must grasp the fact shown in the last chapter, that baptism is two things: (*i*) the sacramental means by which sin is washed away; and (*ii*) a new birth into a life of grace. Having that clear in our minds, we shall see that the infant needs both these blessings: (*i*) It is born subject to sin and should therefore have this sinful inheritance washed away; (*ii*) it needs, too, the new birth, the being "buried with Christ", the transplanting into a new soil where spiritual graces may grow and spiritual fruit be ripened. We all inherit from our first forefather Adam a weakened and tainted nature; we are to receive from our Lord, the second Adam, the remedy for this evil. As we received our first birth and its attendant evils in an unconscious state, there would seem to be nothing unreasonable in our reception of the second birth and its attendant blessings while in the same unconscious, infantile condition.[2]

[2] See Sadler: *Church Doctrine Bible Truth.* As to our fallen nature, see chapter nine of this book.

Two points need yet to be emphasized, before we close, as touching the arguments of those who reject this doctrine. The first objection is that it is outrageous to our moral perceptions to ask us to believe that unbaptized infants are lost. The second is that it makes too great a demand upon our intelligence to believe that an unconscious child can receive a spiritual gift or blessing, since moral strength comes as a response to moral effort.

As to the first objection: The point is not that all infants are lost who have not been baptized. The Church has never pronounced on that question. Various opinions have been held as to the spiritual condition of children dying unbaptized; according to none, however, is it now held that such children are lost in the sense of eternal condemnation. Some years ago the Rev. James Richmond, a brilliant but eccentric priest of the American Church, was holding services in a new town in the far west. As usual a large proportion of the children in the new settlement were unbaptized and Mr. Richmond was preaching about the necessity of the sacrament. Suddenly he paused in his sermon and said: "I am sometimes asked what will become of the children who die unbaptized. Standing in this pulpit and clothed with the Church's authority, I am not permitted to pronounce any judgment on the subject, because it is a mystery on which the Church has never been guided to speak. But"—and here he threw off his surplice and stole, left the pulpit and walked down into the middle of the church—"But," he continued, "I can now speak as

plain James Richmond alone, and I will give you my answer. Will unbaptized children be saved? Yes, I believe they will. My gravest doubts are about the parents who kept them from the sacrament."

On the ground of probability alone (and in other matters probability is a guide in life) a careful and conscientious parent will desire to bring his children to baptism. If in that sacrament there is promised a gift of new life, though he may not himself see the reasonableness of the promise, he will not wish to take any chances; he will gladly give his children the "benefit of the doubt". As plain matter of fact, however, for one case where parents withhold their little ones from baptism because of conscientious objections to the practice, there are dozens where the neglect of the sacrament is purely a matter of religious indolence and negligence. With such parents, Mr. Richmond's language is none too strong.

As to the second objection, we reply: The fact that children are capable of receiving the grace of baptism seems clearly evident from our Lord's words to the disciples who rebuked those who brought little children to Him that He should touch them. If children could receive a blessing from Him when He was on earth, who shall deny that they can receive it now? In three of the Gospels we have instances of children thus brought to Christ, that by His "touching" or "laying His hands on them" they might receive a spiritual blessing. What makes the analogy to baptism peculiarly significant is that this blessing was to be received through an outward symbol or

sign. Our Lord was indignant when the disciples would have sent the little ones away. He insisted on receiving and blessing them, though they were unconscious of the significance of what was being done for them. What right have we to think that His indignation is not aroused at the lack of faith in those who would keep back children from Him in these days? In baptism He touches the little ones, and His touch stirs in them a new life: who shall refuse them this great gift, because they must receive it unconsciously, seeing that their natural life was given them in the same state?

One thought more, and we close this chapter: If life is given, it must also be sustained. Baptism is a new birth. After birth there must be provision for the maintenance of life. This is just what the Church does in requiring that there be sponsors for the child who is to be baptized. Regeneration has just been compared to the transplanting of a seed from soil in which it could not take nourishment to another in which it may bear fruit. But as light, heat, and air are necessary for the growth and formation of the seed life, so the light of God in the knowledge of Christ, the warmth of the Church in the fellowship of the saints, the divine atmosphere taken in and breathed out by prayer, are necessary for the growth of the soul, and the Church requires certain guarantees that these will be provided. That guarantee is given in the solemn pledge of the sponsors, who are provided as sureties to see that as children grow to

years of discretion they shall know the meaning of their religion and the seriousness of their responsibility. Of course, the parents may act if god-parents cannot possibly be had but this ought never to be done except in case of absolute necessity. The parents are the child's sponsors by nature. There could be little reason in their formally taking the responsibility upon themselves at the baptismal service, inasmuch as the responsibility is theirs already. Their spiritual duties as the parents by nature are exactly what they would be taking upon themselves as parents by grace, god-parents. Where they may be had, therefore, other sponsors are required, so that should the parents die or fail in their duty someone may be under obligation to look after the religious well-being of the child and see to its proper training in the life of the Church. It may be questioned whether baptism should ever be administered without the assurance that the grace given will not be neglected. Far better that the child should be left to God's "uncovenanted mercies"—that is, His mercies of which we are reasonably sure, though they are not set forth as promises or covenants.

Sacramental grace never does away with individual responsibility. We must see that children receive the grace which is promised to all who are admitted into the Church by baptism; but we are under an equal obligation to see that they are taught to appropriate and use the grace for the up-building of their Christian life. Neither baptism nor any other sacrament is a magical charm working apart from human effort.

XIX.

THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

RELIGIOUS workers in army camps learned something about worship, if they had open minds. They discovered that there was just one service which had wonderful popularity with the men, wonderful power and impressiveness. Chaplains of almost every religious name have testified to the fact. Letters from camp and from the front told of gatherings where men have been hushed into deepest reverence. The services which they describe—now for a few gathered at an early hour in a Y. M. C. A. hut; now for many hundreds at a midnight service Christmas eve; now for men with serious faces and solemn thoughts just before going "over the top"—are not "services of song" or "prayer meetings with pep in them" or "camouflaged preaching" under the guise of a motion picture entertainment or "intoned matins with a sung *Te Deum*". The service which always grips men's souls is the Lord's own service, the Holy Communion. Whether it were a quiet communion for a few wounded men, or a mass for the dead back of the Flanders battle line, or a night service near the

trenches, or a more formal celebration in one of the churches that had escaped utter ruin, the one service that always went straight to the heart was the service which commemorates the world's great sacrifice, the Calvary tragedy that ended in the Easter triumph. The men always showed that they loved it. They cannot tell why, but love it they do. And there is so much in the service it is small wonder they cannot explain why it stirs them. They "sense" its power without knowing how or why.

The pity of it is that so many of them had to go through the horror of war before they could discover what worship is, how real its comfort and its strength. The pity is, again, that the Churches have failed to tell much of the meaning of the Lord's own service or to put it in its rightful place in public worship. Even the Roman Catholics, who have at least done this much, have smothered the service under a mass of puerile ceremonies, surrounded it with tawdriness and by rendering it in an unknown tongue detracted from its human helpfulness. The pity, still more, is that multitudes of people, when they have had any teaching whatever about the great service of the Christian Church, have had only controversial teaching. The Churches have been so busy explaining what it is not that they have forgotten to show what it is.

It is one of the great tragedies of Christian history that the Holy Eucharist ever became the subject of so much theological dispute. That this which was given by our Lord as a "blest sacrament of unity" should be made a centre of strife and discord is one

of the saddest sights of our disunited Christendom. Perhaps if we were satisfied to think of the doctrine of the Eucharist rather in its broad general principles, the very simplicity of such a consideration would make the beauty and reasonableness of the truth so apparent that there would be less room for disagreement. It is not, therefore, the purpose of this and the following chapters to study the subject much in detail; we are rather to look at it in this simpler way, in the hope of stating the primitive teaching in modern language with as little reference as possible to the opposing theories of the different schools.

Even though we try to empty the sacrament of all mystery, it is yet the dying request of a loving Friend. Jesus Christ was so thoroughly human. He had all our human longing not to be forgotten. While, of course, He desired to be remembered for our sakes, not for His own, He did ask to be remembered. If the Holy Communion were nothing more than this, we should at least be obedient to the Lord's last request. What kind of a son is he who would forget the last expressed wish of his mother? What kind of a friend is he who forgets his friend's dying desire?[1]

But the sacrament is much more than this and the Church has always felt it to be much more, however men have differed in their interpretation of its larger meaning. One much-forgotten aspect of the service it will be the purpose of this chapter to explain. To

[1] See my *Back to Christ*, chapter iv.

many Christians it is a sacrificial service. How, then, can it be so regarded? What do we mean by eucharistic sacrifice? In order to explain we must go back to first principles.

The element of sacrifice is absolutely essential to the spirit of worship. Just as we endeavor to show our love for parents or brethren or friends by giving them something, by gladly putting ourselves to little inconveniences for their sakes, by surrendering cherished desires and possessions to show them our interested and thoughtful affection—so we try to express our love for God by giving Him of our substance or our time, by bending our wills to His desires and cheerfully devoting ourselves, body and soul, to all that may give Him glory and honor among men. This leads us to make our offerings to Him, of whatever sort they may be, just as children pluck a flower from some plant in the garden, something they themselves have cared for and tended, that they may give it to some loved friend or relative.

Such is the principle of sacrifice apart from sin. Through the fall, however, it has become more than this: for what men should have presented in glad love and full communion with God, they must bring to Him now in penitence and shame, in the hope of restoring the fellowship they have lost and as a propitiation for the offenses which have broken that fellowship. In all nations the world over, therefore, we find this new instinct of sacrifice as a means of securing the renewed favor of the deity. Corn and

wine and oil and fruits and flowers are offered the offended divinity; birds and beasts are slain by thousands and burned, that the odor may be a sweet smelling savor for their god; human victims, even, are hurried to the altar, that their death may be the means of saving others. Horrible as the heathen sacrifices were, they witness to the natural religious instinct of the race, the endeavor of men to atone for sin and do worthy, sacrificing service for their deities.

When God selected out of the nations a people for His name, He responded to this instinct of worship by authorizing a most elaborate system of sacrifices. What came now, not in gratitude alone but as man's acknowledgment of sin, was taken by God, freed of impurity, and used by Him to educate His people into a realization of the awfulness of sin, of their just separation from Him who is all-holy, and of the need of some better sacrifice that could make them unblamable and acceptable in His sight. This was the meaning of all the bloody offerings that made the Jewish temple almost a great butchery. It was all intended to make men feel how dreadful sin was and how much they needed some sacrifice and propitiation to place God and themselves at one again.

Then when the need was felt, and felt deeply, God supplied it. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin; the efficacy of these sacrifices lay in their union with what was yet to come; their offering was continued as leading up to and preparing men to receive the one great sacrifice. God was

waiting during these times of preparation and finally He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to be the real propitiation for our sins. Christ, by His sacrifice on the cross, culminating a life of sacrifice and obedience, forever redeemed us from sin and death and gained for us the gift of everlasting life.

It is worth noting, in passing (note this as a very important parenthetical paragraph), that as our Lord's sacrificial death must be accepted by us in faith, it is implied that we cannot plead the death on our behalf unless we are trying to correspond to the life. Our sacrifice must not be the bare offering of another's merit, it must be an offering of ourselves, with all the powers of soul and body, in union with the sacrifice of Calvary.

To resume the main thought: The sacrifice of the cross, while it was one, perfect, and sufficient, did not end on the first Good Friday. He who was priest and victim passed into the heavenly courts and there perpetually pleads the merits of His earthly life and death, offering continually His blood shed for sinners. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains this heavenly oblation, by its ante-type, the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. As the Jewish high priest, when the victim had been slain, entered within the veil and offered the blood, sprinkling it on the mercy seat, so Christ entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us and there as our great High Priest to plead His blood as of a lamb without spot or blemish, the Lamb slain from the foundation

of the world. "Although He is forever seated there, as one whose toils are over, yet He is a 'priest upon His throne' and is perpetually engaged in presenting on our behalf the life which He once for all laid down, and has taken again, and never needs to lay down from henceforth."

Now at last we have reached our point and can see how the Eucharist has sacrificial meaning and its celebrant a priestly character. The same offering which our Lord makes in heaven is pleaded by His priests as they accomplish His service on earth. He instituted and ordained these holy mysteries as pledges of His love and for a continual remembrance or memorial of His death. Here at His altar, "we set forth His death, we lift it up on high, we magnify it as our only boast, our chief glory, our one hope. And in so doing the veil between heaven and earth is lifted, and we find ourselves one with Him in that ceaseless presentation of Himself for us in the inexhaustible virtue of His past suffering." [2]

There have been endless discussions as to whether the offering of the Eucharist is to be connected with the heavenly oblation, or with the immolation of Calvary. Possibly the truth lies in the union of both thoughts. The one great sacrifice of the cross is lifted up on high by our Lord in heaven and by means of that sacrament which He puts in our hands we plead it also on earth; and yet as the satisfaction of the cross lay in the obedience even unto death,

[2] Mason: *The Faith of the Gospel.*

so the gifts of the altar, the broken bread and the outpoured wine, mystically reproduce the dissolution of soul and body in which the passion of our Lord had its climax and close. When the priest at the altar breaks the consecrated bread and offers it, he lifts up the same broken body that hung on the cross, and re-presents the oblation of Calvary.

The Eucharist is a sacrifice, then—a commemorative and representative sacrifice, but a sacrifice nevertheless, in which there is a real offering. As the service of the Day of Atonement was incomplete if it stopped with the killing of the victim and reached its perfection in the sprinkling of the blood and the pleading of the high priest within the veil, so Christ's sacrifice must be pleaded in heaven and offered for the souls of men on earth. Both actions are essentially sacrificial and in their union man finds his cravings satisfied and his restored union with God made possible.

One cannot close without showing the practical value of this thought. The Jewish high priest, when he went in unto the holy place, bore the names of the children of Israel on the breast plate of judgment for a memorial before the Lord continually. And our great High Priest, the Son of God, now gone to the presence of the Father to offer the avails of His sacrifice, bears on His heart our names, too. What He does in heaven He enables His priests to do here. Every Eucharist offered at His altar gives opportunity for special remembrance, so that by offering it with

intention the merits of our Lord's atoning death may be pleaded for each of us individually and as petition after petition rises to the throne of grace each pleads for us all that Christ did and does, each becomes a means of special blessing.

Are we using our altars in this way, as we should? Let us picture the ideal of what a church should be. Sunday after Sunday, and day after day, as its doors are opened, we see our people coming together, eager to enter God's house and to kneel before His altar. We read their hearts and find that each has its own trial, or trouble, or joy; we know that each is coming to spread this before the Lord. Here is a woman whose son is careless, thoughtless, unbelieving. Long ago he ceased to observe his religious duties and the mother's heart is pained at his increasing indifference. Here is a man whose business has been troubling and pressing him for months, who knows not where to turn as the difficulties thicken from day to day. Here are others in whose family life there are dark shadows, the curse of drink or the evil breath of immorality has touched some one of the members of the home circle and the others are heavy-hearted. Or there are some with near friends or relatives dangerously ill, or under the dark shadow of sorrow, or in the stress of some personal trouble, battling with doubt or struggling with temptation. During the years of war how many anxious or sorrowing hearts have come through that open church door! Others are here as full of joy as these are of pain—thankful for some special mark of God's love and favor and

coming with light hearts and glad voices to join in the praises of the Church.

The great fact which the Holy Eucharist brings home to us is that in their sorrow or rejoicing they are not alone. The priest at the altar has not been left to guess at their needs or blessings. They have taken him into their confidence, have told him the evil and the good together, and they know that their names are on his lips and in his heart as with uplifted hands he petitions the throne of grace. Those who are in sorrow have not come here to pray alone, as they struggle out of their darkness into light—they can pray so at home. They have come to plead the merits of their Redeemer, to be present at the lifting up of His sacrifice; they have asked the priest, when He makes the oblation, to offer it for them, with special intention. They are not alone, the Eucharist has been made theirs, the merits of Christ's atoning death have been pleaded for each individually, and together with the intercessions of Christ in heaven the prayers of the congregation, being united in this offering, have ascended for each one. None has been forgotten, none overlooked.

This is our ideal of a church in use. Can we not do something to make the ideal a reality?

XX.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

THE tragic blunder of Protestantism has been its failure to make the Lord's own service the central act of worship on the Lord's own day. The tragic blunder of Romanism has been its fatal emphasis on the sacrificial aspect of the service to the neglect of communion.

The Holy Eucharist is easily the most intelligible and popular because it is the most dramatic and appealing service of all the many methods of Christian worship. That must have been apparent to any one who read the last chapter carefully. But the service is not only dramatic and appealing, it is also so intensely human. It is all this, because it is communion and fellowship with a Lord and Leader. It is communicated character. Goodness is the one thing we cannot keep to ourselves. This service is the Lord's way of communicating His goodness to us.[1]

In the last chapter we found that Christ's offering of Himself on Calvary, to be effectual, must be lifted

[1] See my *Experiment of Faith*, chapter xiii.

up in heaven and pleaded for the souls of men on earth. Both actions are essentially sacrificial and in their union man finds a satisfaction for sin and the possibility of restored fellowship with God. But while the sacrifice makes our reunion with God possible, it is the feeding upon the sacrifice that makes it actual. We turn then to the thought of communion in the Eucharist.

To have not merely the remission of sin and the removal of the barrier that kept him from God, but on his restoration to have sensible fellowship with the Almighty—this also is one of man's natural religious instincts. He desires to commune with the divinity he worships, to hold converse with God and to have some sensible token that God holds intercourse with him.

So we find in all religions some effort toward realizing this communion. The Jews had their sacrificial feasts, when offerings were made to God and then partaken of, in part by the offerer and in part by the priest as the representative of God—thus showing that God had accepted the offering and in token of restored friendship was now sitting at the same board with the pardoned offender. Outside the covenant, there were like feasts where men met together to sup with the gods they worshipped. These were all efforts at satisfying man's craving for divine communion—poor efforts indeed, following exaggerated and degraded notions about the deity, ending often in disaster (for what should have been offerings

of perfect love and purity became drunken revels and lewd debauches) but efforts nevertheless. Behind all the awful degradation of heathen worship, as back of all the formalism of the Jewish service, there was a real truth, a truth that voiced the instinct of every human breast, the desire of man for fellowship, communion, and intercourse with His Maker.

When our Lord Christ came to found His kingdom and to establish the perfect religion, He provided a supreme way of satisfying this need as He satisfied all the needs of men. His incarnate presence—God with us—made it easier to understand that man could come into personal touch with his Maker. All this we saw in the chapters on God's presence and personality as made known in Christ's unveiling of deity. But the gift did not cease when Christ was "received up in glory". Before His departure He instituted the Eucharist as the means by which we may meet with Him now. Henceforth men were not merely to sup with God, they were to feed on God. As He nourished their bodies, so now He would nourish their souls. He sent from heaven the True Bread that giveth life to the world, that those who were His might feed upon Him and not die. "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; for whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

As showing how we have here the fulfilment of what man's natural religious instinct had taught him to strive for, it is interesting to trace in what Livingston and others tell us of the customs of savage

tribes, how "a persuasion has existed in the world that to receive a man's blood, *i. e.,* his nature, is to have the potentiality of being made like him" and how "the further conviction has arisen that if we would be made like the gods we must receive their blood, or in some other way hold intercommunion with them." [2] That which man had been feeling after in all parts of the world and expressing in blood covenants was now to be set forth in such memorable terms as could never be forgotten. As men had supposed themselves united to a stranger and becoming his brother through the drinking or commingling of blood in solemn covenant, so (shadow growing into substance) they were indeed to become united to the Son of God by the drinking of His blood and the reception of His nature.

It is, then, a gracious love feast to which we are invited—to which, indeed, we are commanded—and to which we must come if we would live; for "except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood we have no life in us."

Emphasis should be laid upon the necessity for coming in the right spirit, with the earnest desire to receive the very nature of our Lord Himself. By this is meant not merely coming after a certain formal preparation, but rather that there must be a real desire to identify one's self with the sacrifice of Christ both in His life and in His death. The important

[2] Walpole: *Vital Religion.*

thing in any preparation for communion is this identification of the worshipper with his Lord, this sincere resolve to correspond to His great sacrifice by offering our lives a willing service and sacrifice in return. Coming thus, we are sure never to go away disappointed. At the altar, if our own offering of self has been sincere, we may always be certain of receiving the very substance and virtue of our Lord's soul and body. The gift is mutual. We must really and honestly try to give of ourselves, knowing that if we make the offering Christ in response actually gives us of Himself, that so we may have strength to complete and perfect in deed what we have thus dedicated in will. It is the absence of such a spirit that has made Holy Communion so unreal and artificial for ourselves and often for others an act of pharisaical hypocrisy. Sometimes, with distress, one looks at those who come forward for communion in church and fails to see any indication of the spirit of sacrifice. There is rather—God forgive us if it be uncharitable to say it—a certain air of smugness and self-satisfaction which does much to keep others away.

Yet we know the gift is there for those who come aright to receive it. We know, whether we can understand it or not. We look at those around us, and recognize at once the ones who have been fed. One can almost certainly pick out those who make "good communions"—communions where they receive of our Lord because they give of themselves. Other men have a measure of religious fervor, of goodwill toward men and love to God, but these despite occasional

faults rise to greater heights; they live and move in a higher sphere; they love more than other people, they can do more. They have been fed with heavenly food, and in their lives they show a celestial strength and beauty.

Holy Communion is the great fact of the Church's life; it is an essential part of the Christian worship. The prayers and praises of the Church lack vitality without it, the efforts of individual Christians come to nothing apart from it. It is the center and source of our religious life, without which all the rest is a mere shell. We do not live in the flesh without bodily nourishment, nor do we really live in the spirit if we have not the food that sustains the spiritual life. We cannot come to the table of the Lord too often, if we come with due preparation and in the spirit of mutual sacrifice; it is a privilege to be accepted gladly, though with reverence and humility and awe. The early disciples continued daily in the breaking of the bread, daily they knelt at the sacred board, and the highest ideal of the Christian life to-day is not less than it was then. At least we can let no Lord's Day pass without our presence at the sacred feast and we ought to aim at a time when we may receive each Sunday, making every week a round of thankful remembrance of the blessed gift and solemn anticipation of its renewal.

It sometimes is asked, why Churchmen celebrate the Holy Eucharist so often; whether it does not detract from the solemn character of the feast to hold it with such frequency. As well ask whether we are

not in danger of praying too often. Is there anything more solemn than prayer? In it the soul meets God face to face. Yet no one would dream of praying only at long intervals from fear lest this solemn act of supplication should lose its reality because of the frequency of its repetition. Now the Holy Eucharist is a prayer in action; it pleads with God and by "showing forth His death till He come" pleads in the name of Christ. This it does on its sacrificial side; and then the communion is the immediate response of God to the prayer. While one should not come to the Eucharist without due care and reverence, our very presence, though we do not communicate, is something (though it is not everything), and as we join in the frequent offering we gain the spirit of sacrifice that will enable us to prepare more often for worthy reception.

All this, if we once grasp the thought of what the Eucharist really means as a feast and supper as well as an offering. It means life and happiness and union with Christ; it means the continued washing and cleansing of soul and body; it means refreshment and peace; it means the gradual change of the recipient into the likeness of Him whom he receives; it means the constant abiding of Christ in us; it means that He whom the heavens cannot contain will come to us and make us His temple, full of the beauty of His holiness and transformed into the image of His glory.

XXI.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRESENCE

THE Holy Communion is the center and source of the Christian life. It is all this because it is a real feeding on Christ's Body and Blood, not merely a subjective contemplation of His divine character and His earthly work. The Eucharist is something more than a symbol and assurance of Christ's presence and activity on our behalf in heavenly places; it is the appointed means of His actual presence with us here on earth. We look next, then, at the doctrine of the Real Presence, as the exposition of the third great fact in this central act of Christian worship.

As men have always longed for restored fellowship and communion with God, so have they always longed to realize His presence with them. It is not enough for them to know that He is everywhere, that He is immanent in nature, that His power manifests itself equally in the sweep of a planet in its orbit and the trembling of a leaf on its stem. Men want a particular presence of God with them and in their poor efforts at worship they have always sought to find such

a presence. That is the meaning of the idol worship of the heathen in all its forms; for there, as always, the origin of the false religion lies in the exaggeration of a half-perceived religious truth. Men were so anxious for a special manifestation of the presence of God that they erected some object of devotion as reminding them of such presence, and then in time identified the object itself with the presence it was supposed to indicate.

If we believe the Jewish worship to be anything other than a humanly developed system—if it is actually a God-directed worship—then we see how He responded to this longing of men for His presence. The mysterious Shekinah was a special manifestation of God. The presence between the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy seat was God's reply to man's prayer for a special unveiling of His glory.

When the new covenant, the Christian dispensation, succeeded the old, surely we should not expect God to deny a like privilege to men. Rather, an unspeakably greater blessing was bestowed upon them. God became incarnate; His special presence with human nature became a personal union that was to last forever: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Where Christ was, there God was. The apostles saw with their eyes, their hands actually handled the Word of Life.

Once more, when Christ the God-man left earth for heaven He did not wholly withdraw Himself from us. We cannot believe that He would give so great a blessing, only to take it away. Christ is yet with

His people. Where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. Moreover, He has sent the Spirit to tabernacle with us, to make each one of us a temple where He may dwell, so that He inhabits the heart of a baptized believer as He does not dwell elsewhere.

Finally, as a revelation of His special presence, our Lord has ordained the holy mystery of the Eucharist, in which as a pledge of His love He vouchsafes to come to us in a new way. It must be that He meant to assure us of such a presence, when at the Holy Supper He used such mysterious words. When He instituted the new feast—so we read—He took bread and blessed and brake it, saying to His disciples, "This is My Body: this is My Blood." He spoke without qualification, as He had spoken to the Jews in Capernaum a year before, when He told them that the bread which He would give was His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world.

It is commonly objected to this view that our Lord's words here are purely figurative. Figurative they are, we may well suppose. Plainly so, for when He used the words "This is My Body; this is My Blood," His body stood before them unimpaired and He was surely not speaking in the ordinary language of humdrum prose. The difficulty is that when men say that His language is figurative they seem to think that to call it so is to empty it of all meaning. Whereas nearly all spiritual language is figurative; its figurative character, however, warns us that the meaning to be conveyed is not less, but more. The figure

calls for a heavier burdening of the language, the soul of the words is charged with a greater mission. It is a figure of speech to speak of God as our Father; yet in what words could the great truth that was to be told be better revealed than in those which bid us see in heaven the divine counterpart of fatherhood on earth? Here, then, in the words which Christ uses of the Holy Supper, if the language be figurative it is not on that account emptied of meaning; rather it is charged with richer thought. How tremendous must be the reality which needs such metaphor to express its meaning! The inner conception must be at least as great as the figure itself.

What our Lord said, then, the Church has always taught. She declares that when the bread and wine of the Eucharist are consecrated they become in some real, though mysterious, spiritual way, an actuality so great that we can speak of it only as the very Body and Blood of Christ Himself. She cannot explain *how* the change is made; for Christ Himself did not explain it. When men object to the doctrine she can but repeat it in faith. She can say no more than her Lord and He but reiterated His words when the unbelieving disciples found His language too hard for them. So the Church has stated the fact. For a thousand years men were content to kneel before the sacred food, accepting that statement, believing though they could not understand. Then came the denial of the mystery by some who withdrew from the Church and placed themselves in hostile array against

her. Again this eucharistic concord was broken by those who in their anxiety to defend the doctrine forgot the truth that the figurative is the expression of the real and in an excessive insistence upon a literal interpretation attempted to answer that question, "How?" to which our Lord at the outset declined to reply. In attempting to philosophize about the presence the Roman Church added to the Catholic teaching an attempted explanation of the *way* or *manner* in which Christ is present in the Eucharist. This metaphysical explanation is called Transubstantiation. Suppose we all held and taught that a living man on earth is an entity composed of body and spirit and there most of us stopped. Then suppose some venturesome people went beyond this explanation, alleging that the connecting link which united the two and made man a living being was the saline principle in the blood. Then suppose they were to insist that unless we accepted their own explanation of the mystery of life they would have no dealings with us. That is precisely what Rome has done in trying to define the eucharistic presence. Transubstantiation and the real presence are not one and the same thing. The one doctrine is an attempt to explain the other. While the Anglican Church has rejected the explanation, she holds carefully to the fact which it seeks to explain. In the philosophical language in which it is couched the Roman doctrine is capable of an orthodox interpretation, but in the popular understanding of the term it overthrows the nature of a sacrament and

because of its slavish following of the literal leads to superstition and error.

As to what we actually mean by the real presence, however, a simple explanation will be found in the familiar parable of the magnet. Take a bar of steel and rub it with a lodestone. You cannot see any change in it, examine it as you will—it looks just what it was before and yet, as a matter of fact, it has become something more; it is now a magnet, and in, with, and under the steel there exists a new power. So, in the Holy Eucharist, the bread and wine, after consecration, seem to be exactly what they were before and yet they, too, have become something more. Not ceasing to be materially what they were, they have become spiritually what they were not. There is, in, with, and under the material things, a spiritual reality, whose power can be received, whose influence felt.

By the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is meant that He is truly and really there. Real does not mean material. The most real things are the spiritual things. The most real thing about myself is not my body, but my soul, that thing that gives me individuality and makes me myself. And the most real thing about the Holy Eucharist is not the outward symbol, the bread and wine that we see, but the hidden presence, spiritual yet none the less actual, the presence of Him who promised to make this feast the means of communicating to us His own very life, His strength, His power; in short, Himself.

We have in the Eucharist an exact counterpart

of the Incarnation. Christ was God and without ceasing to be God He became man. He is human and at the same time He is divine. He exists as one person in the perfection of both natures. So the eucharistic elements are bread and wine and at the same time they are the precious Body and Blood. They have not ceased to be the first by becoming the second; they are not less the second because they remain the first. It may be questioned whether, in most cases, those who refuse to believe in the fact of the eucharistic presence have ever seriously contemplated the fact of the Incarnation, have ever fully realized that Christ from the very moment of His conception was still God, that as He lay on Mary's breast He was the Supreme Head of the universe, as He hung upon the cross dying in agony He was present in all creation ruling by His power.

We, then, who believe in the Incarnation, believe also in the eucharistic extension of its blessings, we believe though we cannot understand or explain. "Guided by Scripture," says an Anglican theologian whose work is recommended by the Bishops of the American Church—"guided by Scripture, the Church establishes only those truths which Scripture reveals, and leaves the subject in that mystery in which God for His wise purposes has invested it. Taking as her immovable foundation the words of Jesus Christ, 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood,' and 'Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life,' she believes that the Body or Flesh and the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Creator and Redeemer of

the world, both God and man, united indivisibly in one person, are verily and indeed given to, taken, eaten, and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, under the outward sign or form of bread and wine. She believes that the Eucharist is not the sign of an *absent body*, and that those who partake of it, receive not merely the figure, or shadow, or sign of Christ's Body, but the reality itself. And as Christ's divine and human natures are inseparably united, so she believes that we receive in the Eucharist not only the Flesh and Blood of Christ, but Christ Himself both God and man." [1]

This is the grandeur and beauty of the altar. It is Christ's throne, where He waits to meet and bless His people. Here the Church's service reaches its fitting climax, so human is this sacrament, while yet so divine: so human, for the gift is hidden under natural signs and veiled as being too bright for mortal eyes to gaze upon; so divine, for its mystic power seems ever ready to burst into a flame of glory. "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

[1] Palmer: *On the Church*, Part II., chapter vii.

XXII.

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

HOW should one prepare for Holy Communion? What amount of preparation is necessary? If it is a thing so sacred and mysterious as the Church teaches, coming to it ought to be seriously and solemnly considered. One is so afraid of coming unworthily. How shall we be sure we are not so coming? What is a "good" communion? These are questions often asked of every pastor who is trying to instruct his people in the Church's ways.

It ought always to be said at once that a right approach to the Holy Communion means not so much coming after a formal preparation as coming in the spirit of sacrifice, with a genuine and hearty desire to live Christ's life and be "crucified with Him" in His perfect offering of Himself, soul and body, to His Father. After all, as someone has said, since Holy Communion is above everything else food for the soul, we come to the altar because we are spiritually hungry. The fundamental preparation for communion is a life of such earnestness and unselfishness that one is compelled to come in order to receive grace and

strength to carry on this daily work. The best preparation for a worthy communion is "a life of service, so unselfish and exacting that it demands God, in order to live it."

Yet we need method here as in everything else. It is a great mistake to suppose that in religious things we need no plans and methods. What is left to be done on impulse is usually not done at all. We do indeed come to the Lord's table because we need Him; but unless we take time to think about it we are likely to forget how great our need actually is; and in order to avoid vagueness it is well to have some particular form of thought and prayer for use before approaching the holy feast. Such forms are given us in every manual of devotion and it would be a safe rule for most of us to use at least that much of preparation before every communion.

To say such offices, however, should be but a minimum of devotion. There ought to be an effort to supplement this by some special thought and meditation of our own. Along these lines there are many methods that may be recommended.

(1) For example, one way of preparation is by examination for sin. How often this consists simply of reading over the questions in a manual and mentally acknowledging our faults under the several divisions. What we need, rather, is a serious searching of the heart for particular sins, with enough time given to this one single search to make the offense plain to one's own conscience. We take a review of the week, asking ourselves if we have struggled

against any one particular fault. Then we ask what sin we most need to fight against. What is the sin I have committed oftenest since my last communion? What is the fault I most hesitate to confess? What is the thing I should be most ashamed to have others know about? What shames me most when I think of facing God at the judgment? So we take this sin, and come to the Eucharist, asking strength to overcome it, and as we ask for the grace, resolving to make our own effort also.

(2) Again, we may vary this method by fixing upon some sin and then with regard to that asking ourselves three questions as we look forward to our communion: Who is coming to me in this sacrament? To whom is He coming? Why does He come? Suppose we have been struggling against a sharp temper. We ask:

(i) Who is coming to me in this sacrament? My Lord Himself. He who suffered every indignity at the hands of His persecutors; who was struck in the face, spit upon, mocked, insulted; when He was reviled reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not. He who as He hung on the cross, with the nails piercing His hands and feet, with every muscle wrung and wrenched as the cross sunk into its place, was able even in the agony of suffering to pray for those who tortured Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

(ii) To whom is He coming? To me who pretend to be His follower, who have His sign upon me, who are named with His name and would be offended

if men did not call me a Christian—and yet cannot bear one trying word or slight, spoke so sharply to such an one only yesterday, lost my temper this morning, am apt to criticize at the slightest provocation and say biting, sarcastic, angry things to the ones who love me most.

(iii) And why does He come? To make me more like Himself, patient, sweet tempered, and kindly; strong and manly but with the gentleness which the First Gentleman always showed.

We may vary the questions from week to week, taking one fault at a time. Suppose the sin be slothfulness in prayer. Then we put our three questions in some such form as this:

(i) Who is coming? My Lord, who though He was often so pressed with work that He had not so much as time to eat and drink yet always found opportunity for devotion; rose a great while before it was day that He might be alone with His Father; spent the whole night sometimes in intercession; even on the cross, though suffering physical agony beyond description, used His last moments in prayer.

(ii) To whom is He coming? To one who rose so late this morning that he had time only for a hurried sentence, said so unthinkingly that probably it never reached the ear of God; to one who yesterday put off his devotions till night and then hurried over them when tired and half asleep; to one who needs grace so much to correct his many faults, and yet time and again neglects to pray for it.

(iii) And why is He coming? To help me to

realize His continual presence and in my prayers to speak to Him face to face.

We take our own sins, whatever they may be, and selecting one for each communion, ask these questions, pausing over them in meditation, and then during the week after communion going back and in our nightly self-examination asking if we have improved in this one point.

(3) Or suppose, before each communion we hit upon *one duty* which we shall try to perform more carefully, more eagerly, more lovingly. Suppose we find some one person we can help, some one act of usefulness we can perform, some one domestic kindness that may be cultivated, something in the business life or the social round in which we may apply our Christian principles, and then set ourselves earnestly to the task of doing this. By the time of our next communion it would create such a compelling need of God in our hearts that we should consider this Eucharist not a duty but an absolute necessity. "Hard work will make a man hungry for his daily bread," says the chaplain of one of our universities, "and nothing but hard work and unselfish living will make a man hungry for God."

(4) Again, we may prepare for some Eucharist by passing to the thought of thanksgiving. One is apt to grow morbid over the searching for sin—how much brighter and sweeter will be our life if we also seek to remember the many things for which we should be grateful! Coming to communion with our hearts full because of some special blessing, we shall

find the thought of thanksgiving continually recurring throughout the whole Prayer Book service. In the prayer for the Church militant we *"give thanks* for all men". The absolution brings the thought of thankfulness for the forgiveness of the sins we have just confessed, and the comfortable words carry out that expression of gratitude; in the prayer of consecration we *render hearty thanks* for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, and we desire God to accept the offering as a sacrifice of *praise and thanksgiving;* and so throughout.

(5) Or there is also the element of praise and worship. For preparation some week it might be well to read over the service in order to fix upon certain ways of expressing this, praying meanwhile that God will give us the spirit of worship, the adoring spirit, that worship may become our chief joy here as it must be in heaven. The service begins with the prayer for the cleansing of our hearts that we may magnify God's Holy Name; the *Sursum Corda* and *Sanctus* lift us into the atmosphere of heavenly adoration; the prayer of consecration begins and ends with praise, "All glory be to Thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father," and "By whom and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory be unto Thee, O Father Almighty, world without end," and the strain is repeated in the *Gloria in Excelsis,* as well as in other portions of the service.

So, for example, we may make our preparation some week lie in the effort to realize more fully that

the Eucharist binds our earthly worship with that of the saints and angels in heaven. We recall such a picture as that in St. Margaret's Church, Liverpool, in the upper part of which is a representation of the adoration of the Lamb that had been slain, the ineffable Victim lying upon the celestial altar, angels and saints being around Him; in the lower part, an earthly altar properly vested and decorated, on it the chalice and paten, a priest in front with arms extended as he makes the sacrificial prayer, and kneeling by him a company of the faithful, men, women, and children; and as explanatory of the two scenes, as it were unifying and identifying them, streams of golden light issuing from the Lamb above and descending upon the sacred vessels below. What the Church on earth is doing in eucharistic worship that same thing the Church in heaven is doing at the same moment in like adoration and the priest at the altar here is fulfilling the service of Him who represents us and pleads for us in heaven. With this picture in mind, we go over the service again, finding the idea brought out, for example, in the *Sanctus,* where with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify God's glorious name as we join in the seraphic hymn. Careful thought like this through the previous week will make our worship very real at the next Eucharist, and if we come also with special intercessory intention our prayers will be more fervent as we offer our petitions for our friends, ourselves, or the Church at large.

Indeed it is always possible to give great reality to

the service by making it an occasion of intercession for those whom we know who are "in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity," as well as of mingled thanksgiving and prayer for those who have departed this life in God's faith and fear.

(6) Once more, we may use the various parts of the service itself as a basis of meditation, seeking to bring the imagination into play; thus, at the offertory praying for generosity and picturing the poor widow as she cast her two mites into the treasury; at the confession, asking for such penitence as that of the publican; at the absolution, seeing our Lord bending over the man with the palsy and saying to him, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee"; at the prayer of humble access, seeing the woman that had been a sinner prostrate at our Lord's feet, bathing them with her tears and wiping them with her hair.

(7) Or we may follow the division of the Church year, and so at different seasons vary our thought of the Eucharist: at Christmas, making it turn on the real presence; in Lent, on the thought of sacrifice; at Easter, on the joy of sin forgiven; or at Ascension, we may try to picture as above the heavenly oblation and connect it with that on earth, so that with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we may join in magnifying God's holy name.

What we need, in short, is more than the formal saying of an office from some manual of devotion; we should have something that will quicken the imagination, stir up devotion, and give freshness to each communion. No one is so busy as to be unable to set

aside a little time for this, if it be only a quarter of an hour the evening before, a little time before the service in church, or in the case of a busy man, some brief thought, with eyes closed, as he goes to and fro on train or car to his office or work. All this may sound a little pietistic. It is not really so, if we remember that there is no suggestion that all of it shall be done at once. And, after all, do we not need something like this to train us in worship? It is said that Marshal Foch spends many hours every week in devotions before the altar—and surely he is a robust type of manly piety. And Kitchener, who did something of the same thing, was no anæmic saint!

XXIII.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

NO one who has the mildest sort of interest in the delightfully humorous sport of waving red rags before angry bulls will wish to miss this chapter! And yet—and yet—what a blessed thing it would be if we could induce some passionate partisans to lay aside their prejudices and reason quietly and calmly about a matter which deeply concerns every man or woman who has any real sense of sin or regards sin as anything more than a somewhat unfortunate mistake, of rather slight importance, certainly nothing to give us grave anxiety—God is so good!

Sin is not a thing to be treated in this casual fashion. In any discussion of confession and absolution it ought to be stated at the outset that the question has to do with the most serious concern of life, the removal of the barrier that separates us from God. It would be absolutely useless to discuss it with one who does not realize the awfulness of sin. There must be something more than a readiness to confess that we have faults and failings. If we have not the consciousness of personal guilt present and dis-

turbing the soul, a sense of the grievousness of sin, a feeling that in our own case its burden is intolerable, then we are not in a mood to discuss any method by which it is proposed to bring us the blessing and peace of forgiveness. This chapter, then, is for those who know what sin is, who are troubled and concerned about its presence within them, who with all their heart desire to be rid of it and to be wholly turned to God. So often questions about confession are asked in a flippant or argumentative spirit. It never does any good to try to answer them, if they are so asked. But if it be realized that sin is a dreadful reality, awful in character, deadly in its consequences, and that to discuss it is a solemn and serious matter—in that case a quiet consideration of the subject of confession may be helpful.

At the outset it will be well to emphasize at once the fact that no one dreams of asserting the power of a priest, in himself, to forgive sins. All worthy penitence, whether with sacramental confession or without it, surely receives God's fullest forgiveness. No priest has power to forgive sins. God only can do that. He only knows the heart of man and He only can pronounce pardon. It is well to note, however, that the pardoning authority is exercised by the Second Person of the Godhead. "All judgment is committed to the Son"—who, because He has become incarnate and has lived our life in its weakness and limitations, brings us the assurance that we are judged by One who has experienced our temptations, is per-

fectly acquainted with our infirmities and tenderly pitiful of our failings.

As if to emphasize this, our Lord once worked a miracle to prove His possession of the authority. "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins—then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house." It is significant that the power is exercised by Him not in His divine nature only but through His humanity. "The *Son of Man* hath power on earth to forgive sins," He says. "He hath authority to execute judgment also, *because He is the Son of Man.*"

Let us notice just one more fact: that in the first offering of His pardon to the penitent soul our Lord Christ bestows the gift by means of a sacrament. We need not go over the whole subject of baptism again; enough to say that conviction of sin, conversion to God, and faith in Christ are not all that the sinner needs; if these are real, they will lead him to our Lord in childlike submission to His will to receive pardon in the way He offers it, by complying with the simple rite which He ordained for the healing and cleansing of our moral nature. Here, then, we have reached a point where a remarkable fact appears: that God the Son in offering to remove the burden and guilt of sin attaches the gift to outward, visible, material means. And not only that, but uses weak and fallible men as His instruments in the application of these means. It surely is no straining of logic to assert that if God uses His ministers

in the bestowal of the first pardoning gift in baptism He may also use them in renewing our baptismal purity when we have again fallen into sin. This is exactly what absolution does for us—it is a re-application of our original baptismal blessing, a daily proffer of pardon, given through outward means and by the authoritative voice of God's minister.

How else but on this theory shall we explain the passages wherein our Lord gives special authority to the Church and her ministry in dispensing the forgiveness which He came to impart? "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," He says to His apostles. He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained." Nor is the authority given to the apostles alone; it is to pass on to their successors. Telling them that they are to receive power from on high and are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, He adds a word which was not fulfilled in them personally but will be in those who have afterward entered upon the same office, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

Our Lord, then, is the true source of forgiveness; He exercises His power as Son of Man in His human nature; He appoints others to carry on the pardoning work after His ascension, in His Name; He endows them with the Holy Ghost for their office and He provides that the authority given them shall pass to their successors, with whom He guarantees His presence as long as time shall last.

The place of confession and absolution in the Christian life is seen, therefore, to be of a piece with sacramental doctrine in general. Just as God uses material means in baptism for conveying forgiveness and new life to the soul, just as in Holy Communion the soul's food is given through outward and visible signs, so here God offers a special gift to the penitent, attaching it to an outward form, the human voice, the solemn gesture of benediction, the words of covenanted meaning. There is no question whatever of human intervention in God's gift of pardon. He and He only forgives and there can be no doubt that He freely forgives all in whom He sees the movements of contrition. But for our sake, that we may be helped to a knowledge of self, that there may be fostered in us a real and sincere sorrow for sin, and that our faith may be quickened to a deeper realization of His cleansing grace, He has provided this special sacramental means of imparting pardon and grace, using for that purpose as His authorized agents and representatives the ministers of His Church. They are His ambassadors, speaking in His name. He has committed to them a "ministry of reconciliation".

In all that has been said thus far there need be no reference whatever to what is known as auricular confession. The cleansing grace of absolution is received in the public offices of the Church as truly as in the private administration of the sacrament of penance. The use of private or auricular confession is

purely a matter of discipline and practical utility; doctrinally it differs in no way from public and general confession. "In itself, so far as the movement of grace is concerned, the absolution is the same, whether public or private. The difference lies in the method of preparing to receive it. If souls are able to grasp it for themselves as firmly, it is as valid and full when uttered in a general formula to a thousand together as when uttered to them one by one." [1]

Yet it may be questioned whether many of us have so complete a knowledge of self or so intense and vivid a realization of God's presence, that we can put into the general confession the same deep penitence as into a particular confession or receive from the general absolution the same comfort and confident assurance as from words addressed to us individually. While we frankly acknowledge, then, that private confession should not be urged indiscriminately upon every soul and freely admit some of the dangers that surround it, it does seem that for most of us God is meeting here a real craving of the soul. A natural impulse leads us to some particular confession, not to God only but in the presence of others. So it was with those who were baptized by St. John in the Jordan, "confessing their sins"; so with those at Ephesus who had been convicted of sin and "came and confessed and showed their deeds". Practically, in the case of many of us, is it not

[1] Mason: *The Faith of the Gospel.*

true that confession to God alone is merely admission of sinfulness rather than humble confession of sins? Most of us do not realize very keenly the presence of God and to tell our story to one who is His delegate fosters a holy shame and contrition. For many it seems the only way of honor (since we have sinned against an Incarnate Saviour who was manifested as man) to make before man a formal acknowledgement and confession. Some of us, too, would never know our sins if we were not thus forced to go over them in detail. Others (and that from no weakness or indecision of character) need the aid of counsel and advice from a godly and experienced minister, and though "direction" is no necessary part of penance they cannot get this without telling him their sins. Some, without any morbidness, long for the personal assurance of forgiveness, "Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." Yet others have felt that the knowledge that they must from time to time make particular and detailed confession of their sins acts as a restraining influence and helps them to conquer such sins in recurring temptations. They ought not to need such restraint, they are quite aware, and yet as a matter of fact they do need it and are helped by it.

For these, or for some one of many other reasons, one who is seriously and anxiously trying to gain peace with God may desire special help other than that of the larger and more general assurance of forgiveness in Christ and at least at some time in his life, or at some important turning points, may need

the help of private confession and absolution. The unfortunate fact is that in most people the sense of sin has fallen to a very low level. They do not bother their heads about it. "Let the dead bury their dead." "Why worry?" I am far from believing in frequent private confession, still less have I any sympathy with over-insistence upon it as a prerequisite to Holy Communion. My own pastoral experience has proved to me that sometimes those who practise it are by no means the sturdiest type of Christians. But I do know that at times it is necessary. Wide experience has taught me that on important occasions, at least, it is a blessing, and I know that for those who are preparing for confirmation and are in a receptive state it has immense influence in deepening their sense of sin, their assurance of pardon, and in general their consciousness of the divine. The time has gone by when a mere word about confession was enough to drive people crazy who saw no harm in a secluded tete-a-tete interview between the pastor and a member of his flock. The truth is, that if intercourse of this kind is to be allowed it is much safer in this way than in any other, as being more open as well as surrounded with the solemnities of religion.

It may be asked whether confession is really a teaching of the Anglican Church. In that case we have only to point to our formularies. In the form of ordination of priests in the Prayer Book we find words that express plainly the belief that though God alone forgives sin, He uses human instruments in

doing so. "Receive the Holy Ghost," the bishop says as he lays his hands on the candidate, "for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." If a communicant cannot quiet his own conscience and is held back from the altar, this advice is given in the American book: "Let him come to me or to some other Minister of God's Word and open his grief, that he may receive such godly counsel and advice as may tend to the quieting of his conscience and the removal of all scruple and doubtfulness"; or, as the English book puts it, he is to go to his parish priest, "or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's word and open his grief, that by the Ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." In our Prayer Book, in the office of visitation of prisoners, the priest is directed to exhort the prisoner "to a particular confession of the sin for which he is condemned" and when confession has been made "to declare to him the pardoning mercy of God in the form which is used in the Communion Service"; while in the English office for the visitation of the sick, the priest is told to move the sick person to "make a special confession of his sins" and is then directed to absolve him in these words: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners

who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by His authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

There is, however, an immense difference between this teaching of confession and the Roman Catholic method. However much individual priests may urge such confession and assert its advantage in the spiritual life, the going or not going is left to each individual soul. The matter is to be one of personal choice and desire. This freedom is well set forth in the "Order for Communion" published by authority in the English Church in 1548, where it is urged that "such as shall be satisfied with a general confession be not offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret confession to the priest; nor those also which think needful and convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the Church. But in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity; and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, nor judging other men's minds or conscience."

If we are ill, we do not go to a medical lecture and then endeavor, on the information received, to diagnose and treat our own case; we visit a physician, tell him our symptoms, and have him prescribe for us. If we are spiritually sick, then, why should we

not see the advantage of consulting our pastor and seeking his personal counsel, instead of trusting only to the help of sermons, which at best are "medical lectures" on the soul's sickness and are necessarily general in character?

"Sin," says Canon McComb,[2] "is something more than an unfortunate slip, a foolish mistake, a grave misfortune. It is the deliberate setting up of our wills against the will of God. It is not an accidental scar, a wart, or wen, but a deep-seated moral disorder." "At rare moments people who have been dissatisfied with their place, or with their work, or with their income, are startled with a deeper thought—they are dissatisfied with themselves. This is not a sign of morbidity. On the contrary, it is a sign of life, an indication that all is not dead within."

Nor has this chapter been an unhealthy, morbid discussion. If sin is a serious taint—a real disease—it is worth while to ask how best to get rid of it.

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[2] *God's Meaning in Life.*

XXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

IS there such an office as that of a Christian priest? Were not all the Old Testament sacrifices fulfilled in Christ? Have we not all access to the throne of grace through His blood? What need of priests to stand between God and the soul? The word has fallen into such bad odor, too! It arouses prejudice and has a hateful sound to so many ears. It suggests selfishness and cunning, hypocrisy and lies, all that is embraced in the popular denunciation of "priest-craft". Yet, there is the name in the Prayer Book; there it is in the Bible applied to our Lord and His work. "I will raise Me up a faithful priest." "Thou art a priest forever." How shall we redeem the word and show that the dignity and beauty with which Jesus Christ ennobled it are carried over into the work of His servants in the ministry of His Church?

What do we mean by a priest? In the common conception of the word, he is one who offers a sacrifice. We may include in it also a service man-ward. A priest is one who makes an offering to God and dispenses God's gifts to men.

First, then, we must ask what is the fundamental idea of sacrifice. Essentially sacrifice is the dedication of the will to Almighty God. The ideal of worship is this, that over all the earth men shall stand before God in adoration, with words like these on their lips: "Here am I; use me. All that I am and all that I have I give to Thy service. Thou hast made me for Thyself; I dedicate my life to Thee, therefore, I offer Thee myself, my soul and body, in love and gratitude, to do Thy will." This is true sacrifice, and all outward sacrifices are but symbols of this inner reality.

Because man has sinned he has never been able to offer this perfect oblation. Yet, just because he has sinned he feels the greater need of sacrifice, not only in love and grateful service but in propitiation for the failures of the past. There is nothing in the world more pathetic than the history of sacrificial worship: men presenting their gifts to God, seeking for some adequate offering with which to make their peace with Him and so take up their right position before Him once more. In a previous chapter we tried to show something of what that sacrificial worship was and how it kept alive the sense of sin and preserved amid many distortions, degradations, and crude exaggerations the perfect ideal of sacrifice. It was a constant reminder that something was needed before God could find satisfaction in His creation. In some way the life of man must be given to God; nothing less than this could suffice to make God and man at one again.

Never, then, had a true sacrifice been offered the Father until Jesus Christ the perfect Man, as the head and representative of the race, offered Himself to God. Never till then could the Father forgive the sins of men without compromising His holiness and without danger of serious moral misunderstanding. God must have presented before Him one perfect human life, an offering of absolute obedience to His holy will. This offering was made by our Lord Christ—not simply by His death, but in His life. The sacrifice of the cross was the culmination of a life of sacrifice. "I came to do Thy will." From the moment of His birth our Lord's every movement was in loving submission to the Father. God could now look on earth and find one human will perfectly subordinated to His own, one life lived in complete obedience, one soul bearing patiently every trial and temptation, one heart absolutely loyal whatever the end might be. Through misunderstanding and misrepresentation, violence and hatred, cruel injustice and oppression and at length even in death, this Man never swerved a hair's breadth from the divine ideal for humanity. And now, when all was over and mankind in Christ had at last proved itself pleasing in God's sight, the way of salvation could be opened for all.

But not only must the sacrifice be prepared, it must be offered and pleaded as a part of the same great act. Here we are carried beyond our depth into a realm of mystery where it is difficult to find a sure foothold, but the words of Scripture make us confident of the

great fact that the offering begun by our Lord on earth is still continued and that in the heavenly places His presence is ever pleading the merits of His perfect oblation. There He lifts it up on high. His life, His entire dedication of Himself to God, His obedience unto death, is ever present before the Father as the ground of our forgiveness and restoration to the divine favor.

Our Lord is a priest, then, our great High Priest, because He offered and pleads a true sacrifice.

He is a priest also, because He dispenses God's gifts to men. In a supreme way Jesus Christ does this. He brings us pardon, grace, and blessing from above; He ordains means by which divine strength is given to men; in Him "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" and He bestows of that fulness to men, so that through Him the very life of God is brought to them. He ministers to them also in His life of service. This is a part of His priestly work, by which the love and mercy and goodness of God are made real to men. Service such as His is in its essence priestly, because such service is sacrificial, the constant giving out of self, the spending of self, the pouring out of vital strength for others in such fashion that many times "virtue" must have "gone out of Him".

Now the Church represents Christ on earth. Indeed, so real is its inner union with Him that we may say it *is* Christ on earth. It is His Body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And there-

fore, if Christ is a priest His Church is also priestly in character. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," are words used of the Church. "He hath made us [the members of His Church] kings and priests unto God." We are speaking now of the whole body of Christian people. We are all priests, because we are members of a priestly body, the Church.

In what does this priestly character of the Church consist? First of all, she is the means by which our Lord dispenses His spiritual gifts to men. The Church is a household of grace, a body through whose ordinances we are brought into union with the source of all spiritual strength. Again, the Church has a priesthood of service; in works of charity and mercy, in those good works the like of which was never known till the Church set them forth however imperfectly, as the embodiment of the mind of the Master, in the thousand and one ways in which the spirit of Christ is manifested, she holds up His life before men, so that the remembrance of it never dies out of the earth.

And then, because her members are sinful and weak and imperfect and so her self-dedication can never be absolutely realized, she pleads the merits of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, she shelters herself behind it as she lifts it up to God in the constant offering of the sacrament which He instituted in the night in which He was betrayed. We have seen how in this He places in her hands that very life which

He offers in heaven, so that she, too, offers and pleads it before God.

> Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
> And only look on us as found in Him;
> Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
> Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
> For lo! between our sins and their reward,
> We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.

If we realize that Jesus Christ is even now engaged in His priestly work, that it is an essential element in His sacrifice that His blood shall not only be shed but shall be perpetually offered, we shall see that when the Church engages in that divine service wherein she makes the same offering her work is a priestly work.

If the Church, then, is priestly in character her ministers must be priests. Although the whole nation of Israel was separated to God to be a "kingdom of priests", yet certain of their number, members of the tribe of Levi, were called out and set apart for a peculiar ministerial priesthood. They acted for their brethren in making offerings to God, they acted for God in conveying blessings to His people. Not that they were in any sense mediators between God and men; rather, God was using them as instruments through whom He gave gifts to their brethren.

What is true of Israel is true also of the Christian dispensation. All of Christ's people are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood", yet certain of them are called to a special and peculiar service, a ministerial priesthood. In the pleading of His great sac-

rifice they act for their brethren by His appointment; their priesthood is not something which simply inheres in their "order", it is the expression of the priesthood of the whole body. In the bestowal of grace, too, their ministry is priestly: they act for God, they bless in His name, they proclaim with authority His pardon, they act for Him in the bestowal of baptismal regeneration, He uses them in feeding His people with eucharistic food. It is no more remarkable that our spiritual blessings should thus come to us through others than that our natural blessings should be given through parents or friends.[1] The life comes no less from God because it comes through the instrumentality of human parentage; the food is no less given by Him because others have their part in providing for the growing child; the kindly care and education are no less a blessing from above because kinsfolk and teachers have been used in imparting them. So the baptismal birth, the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, the grace of absolution, the strengthening food of the Eucharist come from God, though God chooses to use human agents in bestowing them. Perhaps He confers both gifts—the physical and the spiritual—through these channels, that so the whole race may be bound together in love and thus we find the explanation of the ministerial priesthood in the

[1] See Gore: *The Religion of the Church*, page 160: "Is any spiritual power that a man can exercise so portentously great or so fundamental as the power to bring into the world an immortal soul? Does any power claimed for any priesthood equal this?"

thought of the close union of Christ's people through the bond that unites them to one another by reason of their union with Him.

Now for the *basis* of this ministerial priesthood. Let us go back to the conception of the Church as the Body of Christ. In this body we are set as members. God hath appointed the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him. In this body we live together in the Spirit, with diversities of gifts and differences of administrations—just as in the natural body the different members have each their separate labor, the head, the hand, the foot, the ear, the eye, each performing its own work to the upbuilding of the whole body.

Bearing in mind this thought of the Church as the Body of Christ and ourselves as members of the body, we see the place of the Christian priesthood, as an organ of the body to perform one of its functions. The ministerial priesthood is the arm of the Church. God would not have the Church's work carried on at haphazard. There is a fixed and carefully arranged organization, with members set apart for each particular work. The various functions of the Church are not left to the chance administration of self-chosen agents, there is a certain and definite rule according to which some of the members of the body are appointed to offer the Church's sacrifice and to dispense her gifts of grace as the mouthpiece and representative of the whole membership. The clergy are members of the Church in the same sense in which

the laity are members; their priesthood and ministry are representative and they are in no sense mediators between God and men.[2]

May we not carry the conception of Christ's priesthood into the pastoral work and Christian service of the Church and her ministers? We must be careful lest we base our idea of priesthood only in the *doing* of something. Priesthood goes deeper than that; it must include the *being* something. Our Lord's priesthood was more fundamental than that of the Levitical ministry; it was in His being and nature. He was a priest not only because of what He did, but because of what He was. So it does seem that the priesthood of the Church and that of her ministry must be a priesthood of sacrifice and service, the giving of life as a ransom for many, the utter dedication of self for the good of others. We may be quite sure that as this priesthood of service is more widely recognized in us by the world the priesthood of offering will also be readily accepted. Men rebel at the one, because it seems mechanical when dissevered from the other.

A firm grasp on the essential principle of the priesthood here set forth will lead us to honor God's ministry with greater reverence than do those who

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[2] It seems to me exceedingly difficult to find any middle ground between this theory of the ministry as having special office and function in the Church and the extreme opposite view which discards the idea of a ministry as in any way essential and merely places certain men over a congregation for convenience of administration and worship. See Campbell: *A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, especially chapter xi.

think of the clergy simply as teachers and preachers; none the less will it lead us to honor the place of laymen in the Church. Too often we regard lay membership as a negative thing. Laymen are simply all those who are not priests. Our present way of looking at the subject will teach us that laymen have a positive office. We are not to shift upon the shoulders of the minister all responsibility for the work of the parish and leave him to labor alone for the salvation of souls, supposing that the only duty of laymen is to furnish the money to support the offices of religion! The true layman feels that he has a service to perform which is just as real as that of the priest at the altar. God hasten the day when the laity may fully appreciate their privilege, in worship, in service, in labor for the advancement of the kingdom! St. Paul magnified his office. The clergy of to-day, if they understand their priestly responsibility, will magnify theirs, not in a spirit of class pride and impatience of interference from the laity but in St. Paul's spirit of awe at the greatness of his vocation. May the laity also, without detracting from the ministerial priesthood, magnify their place, too, as co-workers with their pastors in the household of God.

XXIV.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

GOD is a God of order. In nature He leaves nothing to chance, He works by law. We have seen that in the Church also there is a fixed and definite rule by which certain functions of the body are assigned to the ministerial priesthood.

This thought of the orderliness of God's working in the Church will explain the law of succession in the ministry. When it was stated that the clergy of the Church have a representative priesthood it was not meant that their powers were derived from the body; the authority comes from God and is exercised only by His appointment. While, of course, the whole body of the faithful have a responsibility in the selection and appointment of the clergy, the authority by which they act and the powers they exercise must come from God. He only can commission them. The authority could not come from the members of the body, because no one can confer a power which is greater than he himself possesses.

It would appear from Scripture and continuous Church custom and tradition that this commission

from God includes not merely the minister's belief that he has received a divine call, but evidence that he has been set apart and ordained for his work in a divinely appointed way. This is necessary in order that those to whom he ministers, as well as he himself, may have the assurance of his divine commission. An inner call might be enough for *him;* others, however, can know nothing about this. In addition to this call there must be the regularity of appointment as pledging *for them* the validity of his ministrations.

If the sacraments of the Church are mere symbols, it is of little importance who administers them, or how they are administered. A dramatic and picturesque presentation of spiritual truth may well vary in method to suit the age or the race. It would make little difference who were the actors in the drama. But if the sacraments are actually means of conveying life—outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace; channels through which grace is received—then it would seem only reasonable that there should be safeguards for their regular and valid celebration. It has been pointed out by an able and devoted Anglican writer, who has great respect for the Protestant position and has sought faithfully to interpret Protestant thought, that belief in a sacramental presence and gift and belief in a sacramental ministry have always gone together. "Wherever the apostolic ministry has been rejected the sacramental belief has failed. Wherever belief in a sacramental gift has been weakened episcopacy has been defended

merely as a convenience or compromised as a question of minor importance."

This is the point upon which stress is laid by Dr. Campbell, the great English Nonconformist who recently received orders as a clergyman of the Church of England. "I cannot see how it can fairly be disputed," he says, "that among early Christians the Church was always regarded as a mystical unity, an earthly sodality with a super-earthly source and sanction, an order permeated and sustained by a supernatural life. It was not a human institution, a club, a guild, a voluntary association of believers in a common cause." And he continues: "Can nothing be done to rescue the Christianity of the present-day English-speaking world from the calamitous error that it is only a set of views to be promulgated—and a more or less incoherent and unstable set of views at that—and not a life to be lived in corporate and immediate fellowship with another and higher world than that of our every day perceptions? This is practically the whole issue between sacramental and non-sacramental religion as it confronts us just now." [1]

Nor is that all. The heart of Christianity is longing, with a great yearning, for the healing of its unhappy divisions and the restoration of a visible unity. We are seeing, as we never saw before, the evils of division. The war especially has revealed

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[1] See *A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, page 270; also (quoted by Campbell) Kelly: *The Church and Religious Unity*, page 147.

the weakness of a disrupted Christendom. Men who never till now have realized clearly the need of unity, are praying for it, working for it, planning for it, anxiously awaiting signs of its approach. Now it seems to me quite evident that the principle of succession in the ministry is a necessary element in the idea of a visible Church permanently knit into a visible unity. "If there is one Church, one visible society, to which all who are Christ's must belong, it must be made manifest where that Church is to be found. Continuity of doctrine is a great thing, but it is not enough. There must also be continuity of persons. Otherwise any group of dissatisfied individuals may go off by themselves and still say, 'We are the Church.'" [2]

Were unity secured, therefore, it could not long continue without the ministry of unity to preserve it. The *one* ministry is centripetal, varieties of ministry necessarily centrifugal. The greatest possible bond of unity is to be found in the one authoritative ministry locally adapted, working in a Church where there is not only room but welcome for many varieties of thought and worship. If I may be allowed a homely illustration, we have an example of the possibility of such unity in variety in a Church which has succeeded in holding together in loyal membership High, Low, Catholic, Broad, Evangelical, Sacramentalist—each emphasizing one part of the many-sided truth yet none impelled to destroy the unity of the body in order to strengthen its own teaching, each free to hold

[2] Gore: *The Religion of the Church*, page 65.

its cherished truth and yet, through necessary contact with other truth, saved from wholly succumbing to the heresy of the partial and fragmentary.

This is the position to which a group of modern writers have arrived after an examination of the questions which "gather round the origin and early development of episcopacy [that is a ministry through bishops] and the nature and degree of the authority which it possesses. It is the position stated explicitly and with unusual clearness by one of the writers, Dr. Armitage Robinson. "It is for the unity of the whole," he says, "that the historic three-fold ministry stands. It grew out of the need for preservation of unity when the apostles themselves were withdrawn. It is, humanly speaking, inconceivable that unity can be reëstablished on any other basis. This is not to say that a particular doctrine of apostolic succession must needs be held by all Christians alike. But the principle of transmission of ministerial authority makes for unity, while the view that ministry originates afresh at the behest of a particular Church or congregation makes for division and subdivision. We have the happiness to live in days in which a reaction has set in against the long process of the division and subdivision of Christendom. Earnest spirits everywhere around us are yearning after unity. On a reasonable interrogation of history the principle can be seen to emerge that ministry was the result of commission from those who had themselves received authority to transmit it. In other words we are compelled to the recognition that, at least for the

purposes of unity, the episcopate is the successor of the apostolate."

It is, then, the law of the orderliness of God's working which explains the law of succession in the ministry. We believe that Jesus Christ came on earth to found a Church. We believe that His apostles were its first ministers. They, under instructions from Him, organized its government. He had promised to be with them always and so they ordained others as their successors, in whom this promise was to be fulfilled.

It is perfectly plain that at first only those who had been ordained by the apostles could take the office of the ministry. By and by we see the apostles consecrating others to whom is given this power of ordination, so that during the life time of the apostles we find three orders of the ministry established: (1) The lowest order, who were called deacons and were given authority to preach and baptize; (2) another order, who were called presbyters and who not only performed the duties of the minor office, but were in charge of congregations and celebrated the Holy Eucharist; (3) a third order called apostles, who besides doing all that has been enumerated had the oversight of the churches and ordained and consecrated to the ministry. Such were Timothy, Titus, and others. As yet the name "bishop" is given indiscriminately either to those of the apostolic order or to the presbyters; gradually, however, out of honor to the original Twelve, the name apostle was dropped

as the designation of the highest order and the title bishop was reserved for them alone and was no longer applied to the second order.

These bishops (or apostles) have consecrated others and they in turn still others, so that the line has come down to the present day. The succession from the apostles has never failed, and the three orders have never ceased. The three great branches of the Church Catholic, the Eastern, the Roman, and the Anglican (which includes the American Episcopal Church) have this apostolic ministry; the Protestant Churches have dispensed with it. Most of them say that it is unnecessary; some, like the "High Church" Presbyterians and the Lutherans, claim to have a "presbyterial succession" — that is, a succession through presbyters, the second order of the ministry.

The history of the way in which the ministry of the later Church emerged out of the apostolic ministry cannot be exactly traced, but recent searching examination into the whole question of the origin and development of the episcopate has distinctly strengthened the traditional view and illuminated the essential principles, even though modifying some former conceptions. It is good to find that modern controversy has at least led to restatements of the whole subject, so that the historic episcopate is no longer defended merely as a mechanical succession through a tactual act, the laying on of hands, but is urged as embodying the principle of continuity with the past, as expressing the idea of an authority wider than that of any local or national Church, as magnifying the

office rather than the man, and as being "of a piece" with the very idea of a sacramental religion.

These considerations will make it easier to meet the three objections to the apostolic theory of the ministry which are commonly urged here in America.

(1) First, there are those who deny that the Anglican, or the Episcopal, Church has the apostolic succession. Roman Catholics deny the claim and assert that to them alone is due the allegiance of English-speaking Christians as having a valid ministry. What we claim, and what history proves, is that at the Reformation the English Church preserved absolutely her connection with the past. It is not necessary to go into the case in detail here, because so many books and pamphlets on the subject have been published that no one need be at a loss for the facts.[3] There is not the slightest doubt that the Anglican Church traces her life back to the apostles. With her the Reformation was a "reform within the Church" and differed radically from the secession and revolt on the continent. When the storm was over only 177 out of the 9,400 clergy refused to conform to the new order; one of the popes offered to accept the Prayer Book with all its changes, if the queen [Elizabeth] would acknowledge his supremacy, and, in short, there is abundant evidence of the care with which the old ministry was continued through Parker and his con-

[3] See, for example, the latest edition of Little's standard work, *Reasons for Being a Churchman,* or chapters in the late Bishop Grafton's book, *Christian and Catholic.*

temporaries and successors and of the entire satisfactoriness of the form of consecration by which they were ordained. In England, after the Reformation, the Church remained the same catholic and apostolic body she had always been; she retained the bishops and the priesthood, the ancient creeds and the catholic faith and sacraments. She rejected the claim of the Bishop of Rome to be the head of the Church, the source of jurisdiction and the arbiter of doctrine; she removed abuses, guarded against popular errors, returned to the primitive custom of administering the Holy Communion, and restored the service to the people by saying it in a language they could understand, but she made no change which involved a loss of her Catholic heritage. "The separation was from Rome as a court claiming jurisdiction over England, not from Rome in any point of faith or order that had been ruled upon by the Church Universal."

(2) Again, the Churchman must meet the Presbyterian claim to an apostolic succession through the second order of the ministry. Protestants generally regard the whole conception of the "validity of orders" as unmeaning, but the so-called "High Church" party, especially Scotch Presbyterians, are an exception to this position. It is their claim we are now considering. The assertion that presbyters had the power of ordination rests upon the weakest possible foundation —a few obscure passages in the fathers, notably one of St. Jerome, and some instances of supposed presbyterial ordination as exceptions to an admitted general rule, such as (for example) the custom of Alexandria.

Every one of these cases, however, may be explained quite as naturally on the Episcopal theory as on the Presbyterian and over against them is an overwhelming preponderance of testimony as to the world-wide acceptance of the episcopate as the ordaining body. As soon as the Church emerges out of the sub-apostolic age, we find that the episcopate is everywhere established, with episcopal ordination the universal rule. Is it not the height of absurdity, if Episcopacy is found without an exception by the middle of the second century, to suppose that it supplanted a Presbyterianism of the preceding period? Imagine the change being made in that short time from one form of government to another and yet history proving absolutely silent as to any protest, in any Church, from any presbyter whose rights had been so ruthlessly trampled upon! Scripture and history alike must have curious interpretations read into them to show the faintest evidence that any but a Bishop or Apostle ever had authority to ordain in the Church of God.

(3) Finally, we shall be met by an appeal to sentiment from those who care nothing about the apostolic succession and regard the whole matter with indifference, usually with supercilious indifference. "Your claim," they say, "simply unchurches all other Christian bodies and invalidates their ministry. Deliver me from any theory which says that nobody outside the Church can be saved, which then confines the Church within the limits of one or two communions and will not recognize the work of the godly

ministers of other denominations, because, forsooth, they have been ordained by a slightly different method from that of your own body."

The general answer to these several charges is, They simply are not true:

It is not true, for example, that we think no one can be saved outside the Church. We do believe that God has promised salvation through our Lord Christ; we do believe that Christ left the Church to bring this salvation to men and therefore we plead with men to listen to our message. In other words, we believe that the Church is the normal and covenanted way of salvation. But it is far from our thought to tie God down to this one method of bringing men to Him. We believe that He has promised life to those who accept it in this way; but we do not think for a moment that He may not have other ways of accomplishing the same work.

Nor is it true that we confine the Church to our own communion. It has been explained in a previous chapter that the *organization* of the Catholic Church is that which is administered by bishops who are charged with our Lord's commission; but its *membership* includes all baptized persons, whether they be Greeks, Roman, Anglican, or Protestants. Nobody denies that Christ has faithful, loving servants in every denomination, nor does anyone deny that what they are and what they do is the result of the grace they receive from Him. I do not know where this has been stated more clearly than by Bishop Gore:[4]

[4] *The Religion of the Church*, page 156-7.

"We know quite well how the Nonconformist bodies in England grew up. We know quite well under what conditions they have been recruited and gained their strength. It has been largely, at least, because of our failure to be what a Church ought to be. We have by our sins and shortcomings supplied them with only too much excuse for separation. It will therefore cause us the less surprise to find tokens of the action of the Holy Spirit most plainly among them, not only among those who in virtue of baptism are individually members of the Church, but quite as obviously among the Quakers and elsewhere where baptism is rejected. I am sure we ought to recognize, as frankly as possible, that God has been pleased to work with a full measure of His grace far beyond all normal channels and laws of validity. I trust that the attitude of contempt which is so common in Romanists towards us and has been so common in Anglicans towards Nonconformists will become very rapidly a thing of the past. I trust we shall learn to hold with them the fullest measure of Christian fellowship which we can hold without faithlessness to the principles we stand for."

The Anglican Church has never pronounced the sacraments or orders of others invalid. She simply declares that "it is evident to all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and the ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons", and she preserves the apostolic method by providing that none but those having episcopal ordi-

nation shall minister at her altars, but she nowhere requires the rejection of speculative opinions about the validity of any other orders than these, in the stress of later difficulties. We are not harshly condemning others. It is simply a question on our part of preserving what we believe to be the institution of Christ's apostles. "We do not presume," said the late Bishop Lightfoot, "to pass any judgment on Christian communities differently organized than ourselves. Our plain duty is to guard faithfully what has been committed to us and leave others to Him who judgeth righteously." If sometimes we may appear to be overzealous in guarding this trust, it is because in this ministry and in this alone can we see hope of a permanent Christian unity which shall include not merely Protestantism, but Roman and Eastern Christianity as well.

Bless, O Lord, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Catholic Church; fill it with truth and grace; where it is corrupt, purge it; where it is in error, direct it; where it is superstitious, rectify it; where it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is divided and rent asunder, heal the breaches thereof, O Thou Holy One of Israel : through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XXVI.

CONFIRMATION AND OTHER SACRAMENTS

CONFIRMATION has sometimes been called the ordination of the laity. Most Churchmen believe that the laying on of hands brings some special grace to those who have been called to the clerical life and would serve God in the ministry of the Church. However one may emphasize the need of an inward call, the subsequent ordination must be regarded as a solemn and impressive ceremony, a means of conveying grace for a high calling and not simply a formal setting apart for service. Almost anyone who has any conception of sacramental grace in baptism or Holy Communion will believe at least this much about ordination.

Now what ordination is to the clergyman confirmation is to the layman. We have seen that there is a ministry of the laity as well as of the clergy. Let us ask now what our idea of the ministerial office is. We Churchmen think of it as a priesthood—and what has been said will show that we need not be afraid of the word—and our conception of the office is that of one who acts toward God for men and

toward men for God. Yet, however highly we esteem this priestly office, we have seen that back of it is the general priesthood of the whole body of the faithful. In the Eucharist, for example, the priest pleads the sacrifice of Christ as he lifts up the sacred elements, but he does so as the agent and representative of the Church: the Eucharist is a *corporate* service, and what is done is done in the name of the body—we offer, we present. The ministerial priesthood is the expression of the general priesthood.

Or one may think of the ministry rather as a spiritual leadership, the clergyman being the head of the congregation and their mouthpiece in offering the prayers of the Church: but here, again, there is a lay ministry of leadership, as (to take an instance) in the family priesthood, where in the common prayers, in the grace at meals and in the exercise of all that is involved in the religious life of the home the father holds powers which descend to him from patriarchal times, gaining new sanction and authority in our risen life in Christ.

Or, if we think of the ministry as a Christian service and of those who are called to holy orders as being dedicated to a life of labor for their fellowmen, here most of all there is a lay ministry—the ministry of individual service for God, such service as works and prays for the spread of Christ's kingdom and constantly ministers to the uplifting of those one meets in the frequent intercourse of the ordinary, every-day life. This conception of what has been called the priesthood of the laity emphasizes, too, the

thought that all of life is sacred, so that for the Christian it may be said that the line between things secular and things religious is abolished. Every part of home and business and social life is to be penetrated with religion and a man's ordinary occupation is to become his "vocation". There was a time when one's trade or profession or business was spoken of as one's "calling" and it would be well to get the name back as a reminder that the man in the pew is as truly a minister of God, though not in the same office, as the priest at the altar.

It is but a natural step from this thought of the sacredness of life to that of a corresponding grace that shall fit us for its duties. So we find in the special gift of confirmation a full and free outpouring of the Holy Ghost to enable us to live a life of Christian service. The Church leads her own children to confirmation and asks others who come into her fold to enter in this way, because the ordinance is one of such deep and solemn meaning. It is not a bare form or ceremony, nor is it merely an occasion for the public reiteration and assumption of baptismal vows. It is not, in fact, anything that we do, so much as it is something that God does—He strengthens, He confirms, He bestows the sevenfold gift of the Spirit for the labor of life. It is the bestowal of the fulness of the Holy Ghost to fit men for a holy calling. We do not exaggerate its importance, therefore, when we go so far as to say that it is the ordination of the laity. Just as the clergyman must be consecrated and set apart and by the

laying on of hands receive grace for his work, so the layman must be endowed for his. To live in the world and yet not be of it; in the midst of so many and great dangers and temptations to hold always for the truth; in business, in the office, in the shop, or the household, to show forth God's glory; so to act that others may be won by our godly conduct—all this, assuredly, calls for manifold gifts of grace. We are not surprised, therefore, at the Church's belief in the reality and power of the confirmation gift; we should rather be astonished to hear that it could be anything less than is claimed for it. Men need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the multiplied and perplexing duties of life and here we have the pledge that they receive it.

Not that we confine the presence of the Spirit to this or to any ordinance. The work of the blessed Breath of God is not limited to anything less than all humanity in its beneficent operation. But "here His working is sweetest and strongest and largest; here it is promised working, pledged working, covenanted working."

So we find in Holy Scripture that the laying on of hands for the laity is as well established as the ordination of the clergy. St. Paul at Ephesus (Acts xix. 4-6) baptizes his converts and then lays his hands upon them, and through the laying on of the apostle's hands the Holy Ghost comes on them. At Samaria, Philip the deacon (Acts viii. 14-17) baptizes many converts, and then two of the apostles, St. Peter and St. John, come down from Jerusalem, pray for them

and lay their hands upon them and they receive the Holy Ghost. It is no wonder that this laying on of hands is reckoned (Hebrews vi. 2) as one of the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ", one of the "foundations" of the Christian life.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to add that this thought of confirmation as the ordination of a layman for his work leads naturally to a larger conception than most of us have of the sacramental system of the Church. The sacramental idea is not that of grace in baptism or Holy Communion only, but of grace meeting us at every turn, hallowing all our occupations and shedding a divine light on every walk of life: grace that gives spiritual power to the candidate who kneels before the bishop, the successor of the apostles, helping him to serve God amid the eager activities of a business or professional career; grace to bless the newly married couple at the altar, enabling them to live together in what is thus made an holy estate of matrimony; grace to bring physical and spiritual healing to the sick and feeble and to sanctify to their use the physician's remedies; grace to add new spiritual vigor to the pardoned penitent making a fresh start in life; grace to confer character on those who are particularly called to holy orders in the Church of God—and all these gifts just as real as the pardoning grace of baptism or the strengthening grace of Holy Communion.

We do believe, then, that when once it is realized how sacred life is and how much we need divine

strength to live it as sons of God the value of confirmation will be appreciated as conferring a special gift of the Holy Ghost and its appropriateness will be particularly evident when it is administered, as it is in the Western Church, at just that period when one is entering upon life's work. It is sometimes asked why confirmation should be insisted on for those who wish to unite with the Church from other Christian bodies. "You do not ask them to be baptized again," it is urged; "why ask them to be confirmed, if they have already made a profession of Christian faith?" If confirmation were merely a profession of Christian faith or a public renewal of baptismal vows, it would not be thought necessary for one who had already openly confessed our Lord. We do not insist on baptism, because that is something that has already been done for the soul and to repeat it would be sacrilege. But the laying on of hands is something that has *not* been done, something, too, so full of meaning that to leave it undone would be a distinct loss to the soul.

If confirmation were more often presented in this way to those who now regard it simply as a public confession of Christ, surely many more would be anxious to receive it. Unless it were this we could not ask one who had already confessed Him to do so again. To insist upon it would be to lay stress on a mere form. And confirmation is not a mere form; it is an apostolic ordinance instinct with life.

XXVII.

THE BIBLE AND ITS INSPIRATION

OUR final authority in matters of faith is the inspired Word of God, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. To these—not as an independent authority, but as the record of the thought and belief of the Church—we turn for light on the problems of life. Here, however, we are face to face with a fact which we must not attempt to belittle, that faith in the Bible has been tremendously weakened in the generation now passing. The claims of the newer criticism, the moral difficulties of the Old Testament, realized now as never before: these and other causes have upset the faith of many and led them to reject the Bible as a divine revelation. We must face the facts as they are then and endeavor, if possible, to find a solution of these difficulties.

Just what is the Bible? To put this very simply: Holy Scripture is the record of man's search for God and of God's response to his seeking.

Men, everywhere and always, have been trying to find God. The history of the world religions is a record of their efforts to know Him. And the history

of Israel is the story of a nation which, whatever its faults and failings, gave itself preëminently to this religious task. With other nations there is much in the way of secular progress and running with this a spiritual development also, but with the Jews the record of the nation is the record of a people who devoted themselves almost exclusively to the effort after spiritual growth. However we may account for it, Israel is a peculiar people. Its evolution is a spiritual evolution. It seems to have a special work and that work is the development of the religious consciousness. Others sought for God, feeling after Him if haply they might find Him; Israel was in a unique way devoted to the task. It has no history apart from its religious history, no literature except its religious writings. It seems to have but one purpose, to keep alive the knowledge and remembrance of God.

Now if we believe in God as a person we believe that when men seek Him He will reveal Himself to them. When one human personality strives with all its might to know another, that other cannot remain indifferent. Knowledge, friendship, intimacy, is the reward of those who seek it. So those who try to find God learn that as they move toward Him He moves to meet them; when men strive diligently to attain a knowledge of Him He unveils Himself and opens before them the treasures of His mind. In proportion as men have tried to understand His character has He responded and their aspiration has had its answer in His stooping to meet them and breathing into them His own Spirit.

This will help us to see what we are to understand by the inspiration of the Bible. It does not mean that the Book itself is a mechanically inspired writing. It means that men whose souls have breathed forth their longing for God have in turn had His life breathed into them. The men are inspired, rather than the Book.

Yet Biblical inspiration is unique. While we find that other men, and therefore other books, are inspired, they are not guided by God as are the Scripture writers. Men in every nation and every time, seeking God, have found Him, but as the Jewish nation gave itself peculiarly to this search for God, and as its prophets and spiritual leaders devoted themselves with all their powers to this one task, so God made his response to their aspiration more generous and satisfying. Biblical inspiration differs from all other inspiration because it is God's answer to a search for Him such as can be found in no other nation and with no other individuals. The ancient fathers used to speak of an inspiration of the great thinkers of Greece as a reflection of that Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. How much larger and richer, how transcendently deeper and fuller, is the inspiration that comes to the spiritual leaders of a people especially devoted to the search for God, who inherited all the past of a race and nation dedicated to such a search, and but gave expression to the accumulating knowledge into the possession of which they had come.

With this conception of what the Bible is, we shall see the limitations of inspiration. The men who wrote the Scriptures were inspired for one special purpose: that they might tell about God. He revealed Himself to them. He did not necessarily tell them more than other men knew about science, or history, or medicine, or a hundred other things; He simply revealed to them His own character, His nature, His mind, His purpose for men. The Bible is inspired for one purpose—to show the truth about God, to give men a sure and certain record in matters of faith and morals. Mistakes in history, errors in fact, ignorance of scientific truth—none of these, if they be present, will invalidate the claims of Scripture. The Bible writers do not pretend to any infallibility on these points. They are inspired simply to give a right moral teaching and to point out a clear path of faith. Assuming, for example, that they accept the current theories of their time about the creation of the world, or that they place on record a well-known legend about a universal flood, we have no concern about the source of these stories. What interests us is that now for the first time God is related to these ancient narratives: He creates, His Spirit broods upon the face of the waters, He enters into relations with men, their errors are sins against Him, He rewards or punishes.

And so it is with Bible History. We are not concerned so much with the accuracy of names and dates as with the fact that as nations rise and fall, the Bible record of their life differs from all other history in

that it shows God's hand in all things. He stands behind the scenes working His purpose out and whatever human causes may seem to bring about results they are shown to be but the instruments of His power. Secular historians would tell of the struggles of Egypt or Syria or Damascus or the kingdoms of the East and how Israel was affected by their varying fortunes; the Bible historians show God behind all, working out His purposes through human agencies. Secular writers would tell of the reign of Cyrus and its influence on the history of Israel; the Bible writers show this, but show also how God "raised up Cyrus" to carry out His own divine plans. An ordinary historian would tell of human events that proceeded from certain causes and led to certain results; the inspired historian shows God as the moving power behind all causes. In measure there are seers and prophets who have done something like that for us in the Great War. We have only to read them to discover by contrast the heights of biblical prophetic power.

Such a view of inspiration will show us again that there is an evolutionary progress in revelation. If the Bible is the record of man's search for God, we shall expect it to show the steps that have marked the progress of that search. Men do not come to know Him all at once to perfection; rather, they gain this knowledge piecemeal, little by little, till it is for all practical purposes complete.

So there is an evolution in the idea of God. At first the thought of Him seems very anthropomorphic;

then He is regarded as hardly more than a tribal deity; then, in prophets and psalmists, He becomes the God of the whole earth; and at last in the gospels and the epistles, He is seen as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, devising means that all His banished ones may return.

Or take, again, the morality of the Bible. At first, in some of the stories of the Book of Judges, it is crude and imperfect. Even in the psalms there are lapses into a spirit of vengefulness, with imprecations against the enemies of Israel and of Israel's God. These are not to be judged by themselves, but rather as compared with surrounding heathenism. Only so do we get an adequate conception of the immense distance that separated those who knew God from those who had not yet found Him. Yet, little by little, relatively imperfect ideas of God's moral character drop away, until in the revelation of the New Testament we see God in His infinite perfection, a God of beauty, of holiness, of tender mercy and compassion and love. There are great elements of truth in the old conception; for God is just as well as loving, stern as well as compassionate, with a holiness that hates sin. In the days when America was neutral some of us found deep satisfaction in preaching about the Assyrians, because we really meant the Prussians! We "thanked God for the imprecatory psalms"! Habbakkuk had a real message for us! We saw that the Old Testament thought is allowed to remain as a witness to this side of God's nature, as, indeed, it finds reiteration even in the thought of St. John or St.

Paul, or in the words of our Lord Christ Himself. The predominant thought there is of the God whose love for sinners shines in the light of the Cross of Calvary, but Jesus Himself did not speak always with a wooing, almost with a cooing note! Righteous indignation and intense hatred of evil were always a part of the mind of Christ.[1]

The moral difficulties of the Bible disappear when once we realize that there was this growth in the knowledge of God and in the appreciation of what His holiness involves. We are prepared to learn that the spirit of Elisha is forbidden to the sons of Zebedee, or that the imprecatory psalms give place to the prayer of St. Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

So, while all parts of the Bible are of value, all are not of equal value. We reach the Holy of Holies as we gaze on the face of the Son of Man. But the distance that separates the New Testament from the Old is no greater than that which separated the writers of the old dispensation, with all their absence of the full Christian faith, from the ignorance and immorality, the idolatry and superstition of the surrounding peoples, in the midst of which their light was as the brightness of the sun.

And each new bit of knowledge comes only with man's striving to reach up to God. The problem of suffering and evil, a puzzle to the writer of the Book

[1] See Jefferson: *Old Truths and New Facts.*

of Job, who rests at length in the thought of God's greatness and man's littleness and the impossibility of the one being comprehended by the other, is solved for us, as well as it ever will be solved this side of the grave, in the life and atoning death of Jesus Christ. Or, heredity and its blasting course, over which Ezekiel agonizes till he seems almost to reject the second commandment in his indignant denunciation of a wrong interpretation of it, is solved by St. Paul who sees the whole truth and knows the remedy for the inherited sin. Or, once more, immortality and the resurrection, guessed at by the prophets, held fast tremblingly by psalmists, is made certain in Christ. So, all through the centuries, men were seeking after God, finding Him little by little, adding here and there a bit to their knowledge, and at last as they look upon Christ knowing Him to perfection.

It is because the Old Testament has led up so gradually and yet so surely to the splendors of the New, that we postulate God's inspiring guidance through the course of the whole work. "The fruitful soil from which sprang the Christ, the writings which on every page witness for truth and righteousness with passionate devotion, the institutions which prepared the way for the Christian Church and which are associated with an unique moral and spiritual progress of humanity extending continuously over some forty centuries, these surely need no other argument to shield them from the aspersion of being cradled in sheer invention and fraud." [2]

[2] Body: *The Permanent Value of Genesis.*

There is here a sort of concentration of revelation. God reveals Himself in many ways: in nature, for the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; in man, made in God's image, after His likeness; in men especially who have sought spiritual truth, for there His Spirit illumines and inspires; all this deepened and concentrated in the revelation of the Son, who came as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image, the stamped copy, of His Person. Whatever the difficulties of all that goes before, they resolve themselves, when viewed in the light of this splendid outcome of it. We have at length in concrete expression the full knowledge of the Infinite. What Christ is, God is; what Christ thinks, God thinks; what Christ says or does, God would say and do. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father.

XXVIII.

SOME BIBLE PROBLEMS

THE view of the Bible presented in the last chapter may clear up some difficulties about Holy Scripture and its interpretation.

Take, for example, the matter of the higher criticism of the Bible. There is hardly room to go much into detail as to what the historical criticism is, how it may be used, how it has been abused. Suffice it to say that the higher criticism is so called in contradistinction to the lower, or textual, criticism. Textual criticism has to do with the *text* of the Bible. It collects the different manuscripts, where there are various readings seeks to ascertain which is the correct one, endeavors to show the relative value of the different manuscript readings, examines ancient translations of the Bible or quotations in early Christian authors, and so gives us the "text" of the sacred Scriptures.

All this is called the lower criticism because it has to do with the bare text of the Bible, the mere groundwork, while the higher criticism has to do with the spirit of the writing itself and is therefore higher

in its order and work. The higher criticism devotes its attention to such matters as the integrity and authenticity of the sacred writings, the style of the various authors, their methods of work, the sources of their information, what human influences were exerted upon them, how their work compares with that of other writers, what principles dominated them.

It will be seen at once that this sort of criticism, if reverently done, can shed much light on the literature of the Bible, just as similar studies have helped to a fuller appreciation of the writings of great authors of secular literature, Shakespeare for example; but as there have been Ignatius Donnellys in Shakespearean criticism so there are men of like startling type in Biblical criticism, whose work is done in a spirit of defiant antagonism to traditional views. Such men often give us wild theorizing and irreverent speculation and some of them have carried their methods so far as to destroy completely the religious value of the Bible.

The work of hostile critics of this type need not, however, blind us to the value of the higher criticism in general, nor to the debt we owe to men of a more reverent school whose work may prove helpful often, even to many who have not yet been able to accept their conclusions. At any rate, the question can have no terrors for those who hold the larger view of the Bible as just presented and read its pages with the same idea in their minds that filled the minds of its writers—read it, that is, to find God and be found of Him. Such will see that, whoever wrote its earlier

books and however ignorant they may have been about some things that we know, they had gained something which we can never find except by their guidance.

It is when we read the Bible in this way that our own experience convinces us of its divine origin. Read only for critical study, the Bible does not yield up its spiritual treasures; but read however critically, if yet read prayerfully and devotionally, with the earnest desire to know its inner spirit, the Bible is seen to be a divine library—a volume that answers and corresponds to man so precisely, fully, and satisfactorily, in so peculiar, so solitary, so unapproachable a way, that its power cannot be accounted for except on the theory that God was the supreme agent in its production.

The Bible "finds" man—as having intellect, conscience, feeling, it "finds" him; as ignorant, frail, dissatisfied; as sinful or sorrowful; as a seeker after truth, it "finds" him, and "finds" him in a wholly unique and transcendent way. Other religious works possess a similar power, some hymns for example, such as the *Te Deum,* the *Gloria in Excelsis,* or one of our modern hymns like "Sun of my Soul" and "Rock of Ages"; or some devotions, such as the Litany of the Church; or some book like the *Imitation of Christ.* But in two ways all such compositions are immensely inferior to the Bible: first, because their power is derivative and second-hand, it is not original with them, it is but a reflection of the Bible's creative power, as the moon is a reflection of the light of the

sun; and secondly, because, however stirring, subduing, or exalting such works may be, they do not "find" us so deeply, exhaustively, or perennially as does the Bible.

Were we to read the Scriptures more we should have fewer doubts about their value. The witness of our own experience would be an invaluable comfort and support in the presence of plausible hostile criticism. To one who has proved it for himself no criticism can touch the question of the Bible's divinity. It may change our human theories, but it can never change the fact which our theories but seek to explain.

One other fact about the Bible should be noticed before we close, its relation to the Church as the expounder and interpreter of its message. One fundamental error in the conception of the Bible held by many Christian people was pointed out in a previous chapter. They imagine that the New Testament is given us as a sort of compendium of the principles of Christianity and that they have only to turn to it to find every doctrine of the faith and every Christian practice categorically stated and enjoined. As a matter of fact the New Testament was not written to give men their first knowledge of Christ and His teaching; it was written for those who had already received instruction in the fundamentals of the faith; and instead of the direct and categorical statement of the main facts of the Christian creeds we rather have indirect allusions to them as to things already well

known and generally accepted. Even the gospels do not give a first knowledge of our Lord's life. By word of mouth and by the circulation of fragmentary written records most of the events of Christ's life and the principal truths about His person and His teaching had been learned already, and the gospels are, as with St. Matthew and St. Mark, memoirs of the Master's life; or, as with St. Luke, a more carefully arranged and detailed statement of the facts, to teach the disciples the certainty of those things wherein they had already been instructed; or, in the case of St. John's Gospel, a supplementary record written to show the growth of an apostle's faith in the divinity of Christ.

So with the other books of the New Testament, the epistles for example. Those to whom these apostolic letters are written are evidently men who know already the substance of the faith. They have been taught orally about the life and doctrine of Jesus, about the Church and her sacraments, about their own moral duties, about the atonement, the resurrection, the ascension, and the life of the world to come. The purpose of the Biblical writings is to explain things they have forgotten or misunderstood and to correct erroneous doctrine and the practices arising therefrom. St. Paul, to take an instance, wrote to the Thessalonians to clear away current misunderstandings about the second coming of our Lord, not to give them their first information about that future advent; he wrote to the Corinthians, not to tell them for the first time about the resurrection, but to point

out the errors of those who disbelieved or misinterpreted that great fact; he wrote to the Colossians, not to lay down the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, but to show them that their own knowledge of it should have kept them from serious errors into which they were falling.

This is what makes the Bible by itself so difficult to understand. If we wish to know its teaching we cannot turn to its pages and there find a direct, plain, simple statement of fact or doctrine; we must turn to the history of the time, study the tradition of the Church, and with this as a background all will fall naturally into place and be readily susceptible of understanding. It would be very difficult, for instance, to prove from the Bible the need of infant baptism, or the observance of Sunday, or the character of the Christian ministry, or a dozen other things that might be mentioned. But when we study Christian tradition and discover that the early Church believed and practised these things, a dozen or more Bible references come up at once, proving by their indirect allusion the traditional view and themselves incapable of satisfactory explanation unless that tradition be assumed as furnishing the setting of the Scripture language.

By the authority of the Church as the interpreter of the Bible we mean, then, that in reading God's Word we must be guided by the Church's tradition, her creeds and her conciliar decrees. The Bible is a difficult book to study; we need help in reading it and the Church gives us that aid.

Suppose some young students were studying the philosophy of Kant or Herbert Spencer. It would be of great assistance to them if they had a teacher to summarize for them the principles enunciated in the various works of these great authors; it would be of greater help if they had an authoritative interpretation of certain difficult passages. Now the Bible is deeper, more profound, than any human writings and in the decrees of the Church we have an authoritative interpretation of its contents. In the decisions of the undisputed general councils, we have the opinions of those who came immediately after the time of Christ and His apostles as to what the Bible teaching means; not, it will be observed, their personal opinions of what the truth was, but their statement of what the Church had always understood to be the meaning of the sacred writers—an opinion as valuable as would be, for example, a letter from an intimate friend of the poet Browning who had long known him and from conversations with him could tell what this or that passage in one of his poems meant. In like manner, Church tradition interprets Scriptural writings.

In the creeds of the undivided Church we have an authoritative summary of the Bible. We are told: This is what the Church has taught. You will find a fuller explanation of each article in the Bible, which records the original statement of the truth by Christ, or the interpretation of it by His followers, who were members of the Church, explaining her teaching. Start with this teaching, ponder it; then read the

Scriptures and find from careful study of their pages that the teaching is true.

In other words, we believe that the Church gave us the Bible—there was a Church organized and teaching in the world before the Bible was written—and the Church is best able to interpret the Book she has given us.

This is very different from the popular evangelical statement that "the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." We see what that theory results in: Every denomination finding a different faith and system, as each reads the Scriptures from a different point of view; different people going to the Bible to pick out what pleases them or what fits in with their theories and forgetting things of a different character that affect, qualify, and explain what they have accepted. No one is wise enough to choose out of the Bible even what is most necessary. We shall best read its pages if we take the summary of its teaching which the Church gives us in her creeds or in the decrees of her councils and then study the Bible with these as a kind of syllabus, a sort of working hypothesis, which our further reading will prove, amplify, and explain. Otherwise we are like children at a feast, picking out the sweet things we fancy and leaving the rest to our hurt and through our own fault.

XXIX.

THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE LIFE

THERE is one great hunger of the human heart, one passionate yearning, which it longs to have satisfied: to know of a certainty whether there is a future life; to look out beyond the present and see what lies on the other side of the grave. Death is something we must all face; we draw nearer to it every day; it is inevitable for each of us. There is hardly any of us whom it has not already closely touched: some friend or relative it has taken from us, some one whom we have loved long since and lost—is it only for a while? shall we meet these dear ones again? or have we loved them for a day, to know them no more? There is sorrow in the world, too; poverty, sickness, suffering, injustice, misery of every kind; we meet with it ourselves, we see it in others. Is there another life, where all this is to be remedied? All these questions have been pressed home so sharply during the dark days of war. Thousands who had not thought much about them before have had to face them—fresh thousands every day.

Yes, this is the soul's deepest yearning—to know

about these things. Our very faith in the existence of God hangs on the answer; for if all that is unsatisfactory in life is not to be made perfect hereafter, how can we still trust in a God of love? If we have loved and labored for others to no purpose, only to have the heart torn and wounded at last by separation, what a cheerless, hopeless world this is!

Is there, then, another world, is there an endless life, or is the grave our only goal? How men have wrestled with that problem! How they have reasoned and weighed probabilities and wrung hints from nature and forced longings into opinions and tried to turn opinions into convictions—and yet they have not really known!

Outside of Christ, we never can know. One often thinks of the testimony of nature: the morning succeeds the night; the spring time follows the winter; the blade comes up from the buried seed. These illustrate a faith in the future life, but of themselves they prove nothing. Nor does our human reason give any positive answer. Hopes only are offered, reasonable hopes — but we want more than a hope, we want certainty.

That certainty we have in Christ Jesus. "Now *is* Christ risen from the dead" is the way St. Paul sums up the apostolic message. There can be no doubt about it. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; after that, He was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also." And so I know, the Apostle seems to

say; I do not argue, I state facts. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." I know that death is not the end of all things; it is the beginning of a new and perfect life. I am sure of the existence of the world to come; I know that *there* will be found endless perfection of being, that *there* all the sickness and suffering and sorrow of this world will be done away. I am certain that in the land of light there will be the meeting of friends again, the knitting together of the old love. I know it, because I know that Christ my Lord rose from the dead and because I know that His resurrection is not a separate and isolated event, it is the pledge of ours. He became man, lived our life, died as we die, was buried, rose again in His human nature, and in that nature ascended and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. Because He lived and died and rose as man, all men shall rise as He did. He is the first fruits of them that sleep. As the wave offering of the first grain of the harvest is the pledge and sign of all the crop that is yet to be ingathered, so the resurrection of Christ is the assurance that we, too, shall rise and live in Him.

The Christian, then, is absolutely sure of this about which other men can at most but be hopeful. We do not have to reason out our belief; we believe because we have a certain testimony. Those early disciples were witnesses who had seen and handled. We feel that men who spoke and acted as these did could not have been mistaken. We know that such wonderful works as they wrought could not have been

done by deluded, fanatical enthusiasts. We see, after all these centuries, that no such mighty influence as that of the Christian Church could have had its origin, say in the easily exploded dream of an imaginative woman. Its wonderful power is proof of its foundation in substantial reality.

So, then, we do not reason about the life to come; we know. Merely to speculate about a future life seems a terrible trifling with human hearts. Those who feel their hearts bound up now as much as ever with the hearts of those who are entered into rest cannot argue about immortality. That is a frightful insult to a heart that bleeds at the thought of what it has lost. The Church does not argue. To those who are hungry to know their dead again, she has no controversy, no syllogisms, no hair drawn arguments, no fine spun probabilities. She points to Her Lord, who rose from the grave, appeared among His disciples, tarried with them forty days instructing them in the affairs of His Kingdom, and then "while they beheld was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." We need to be reasonably assured of the fact of Christ's resurrection and we do believe that it is as certainly and undeniably established as any event ever recorded in history, but being sure of that there are for us no more arguments. When we know this, we know all the rest.

Yet there is one more question: Suppose there is a future life: shall *we* enjoy it, shall we be fitted for it? You and I—we are sinful; we know our utter

unworthiness: how can we ever enter upon the life of eternity in the presence of God? We to whom prayer is so hard, who with difficulty fix the mind for a few moments on heavenly things; we who find devotion a task, meditation almost an impossibility—how shall we be made ready for a life of unending worship and adoration? We who have so many failings and shortcomings, whose hearts are so easily filled with anger or resentment, who are so often jealous or envious or discontented, who are so quickly offended, so ready to find fault; we who live in the world and are too readily satisfied with its lower standards, who often think more of earthly success than of the heavenly riches, who work and plan for self, with so little thought of others; we who have many of us been guilty of grosser sins that sap the spiritual energies and leave the mind a prey to evil thoughts—how shall we ever become possessors of everlasting life, though we know there is such a life?

The answer lies in the remembrance that He who rose and ascended was victor not only over death but over sin. He for whose glorious resurrection we praise God at Eastertide is "the very Paschal Lamb that was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising again hath restored to us everlasting life." He lived our life—lived it in perfect obedience—offered the sacrifice that we could not offer ourselves and reconciled us to God. He left, too, a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. He gave us the germ of a higher and better life, which begins to

develop in us here and now if we but accept His sacrifice, use His grace, and seek to live in His spirit —and the good work which He hath begun in us will continue hereafter in never ending advancement until at last we wake up after His likeness and are satisfied. He gives us the assurance of heaven hereafter; but He does even more than that, He leads the way to it, and pledges us His help on the journey.

Oh the inspiration of it! Life has for us a new meaning, work has a new incentive, when we know that there is something to hope for, something to press forward to; that the prize is surely there to be won. To be assured that the struggle will issue in triumph—that gives spring and cheer in the midst of the contest. Though I fail here, I must keep up my courage, some day I shall succeed; though I falter, then I shall be firm; though I fall, I need not lose hope, for if I press on I shall at last stand steadfast. I shall have life, but, more than that, in Christ's triumph over sin and armed in His strength, I shall have victory. He whom I try to follow here has won for me and even now helps me. There I shall find Him at last, and rest in the perfect peace that succeeds the strife and battle.

XXX.

THE PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

IF Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then we are absolutely certain of the life of the world to come. But did Christ rise? What are the grounds of our belief in that stupendous miracle? The subject would demand not a single chapter, but an entire book, for any satisfactory argument. We must be content with a few homely, common-sense considerations such as will appeal to the average, every-day, practical man—the kind of man who brings to bear upon religious problems the hard-headed sense which he gives to every-day problems in other fields.

In seeking for a practical, common-sense proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let us first of all settle one thing definitely. This Jesus lived and died. *There was such a Person.* Whatever opinion one may hold of the inspiration of Scripture or even of the genuineness of the gospels, one cannot think that everything told of Christ is pure imagination. The story of His life and death is not fictitious in its entirety. Such a Person did live and He did die.

Well, then, let us start from this point. "He was crucified, dead, and buried." It is very important to settle that fact definitely. He died after a public execution and was buried in a well-known tomb. And then almost immediately His disciples began to assert that He had risen from the dead. We need not trouble to examine in detail their accounts of the resurrection. It is enough for our present purpose to state the general fact that the apostles did assert in plain and straightforward language that their Master had risen; they proclaimed this far and wide and declared it with such positive conviction that many believed what they said. Christ died and was buried and His disciples claimed that He had risen again and appeared among them. There is no disputing this general statement.

Now if the apostles asserted positively that their Lord had risen from the grave and if what they said was not true, why was it not the simplest matter in the world to disprove their statements by producing the dead body? Was it not in the tomb, and if not, where was it and how had it disappeared?

Those who do not accept the gospel story of the resurrection have two theories by which to answer this question: (1) the theft theory, and (2) the theory of resuscitation after a swoon. According to the first the disciples stole the body. This argument has been generally abandoned in our day, it is so manifestly inconsistent with the character of the apostles. Allowing for a moment that they could have stolen the body—though the tomb was guarded and they

were panic-stricken, weak, terrified, huddled together in an upper room with the doors locked—allowing that they *could,* can we possibly suppose that they *would* have done it? Their well-known character, their transparent honesty and sincerity, is sufficient proof to the contrary. We cannot for a moment believe that the men who first preached the gospel were conscious deceivers. One can conceive of their being mistaken, but to suppose that they were deliberate imposters is inconceivable. And yet the theft theory was made necessary by the fact of the death and burial and the subsequent disappearance of the body. This evidently was gone or it would have been produced, to the evident confusion of the apostles.

Then there is the second theory. According to this, Christ did not die; He merely swooned from exhaustion and when laid in the tomb revived, escaped, and appeared to His disciples. Afterward He recovered from His wounds, and His credulous followers mistook His return for a resurrection from the dead.

But there is, first, the well-known fact of the death, which in the case of a public execution would surely have been carefully ascertained and certified. There is, again, the difficulty as to how a weak, faint, half-dead man could have escaped from the tomb. And there is the further consideration that a very brief acquaintance with such a man, slowly recovering from weakness and wounds, would have exploded any notion the apostles may have had of a triumph over death, so that they could hardly have continued to

preach so confidently what sober second thought must have convinced them was untrue. Moreover, does not this theory make Christ Himself a party to a fraud? Surely, even if His return had deceived the apostles, He could not have been deceived, too, or could not long have continued so. And if not, could He have allowed them to preach a monstrous mistake? Was He that manner of man? Or to look forward a little way into the future—how long after this did He live? And how during this time was He hidden? And when finally His death came, how were the disciples still deceived? And what then became of the body? Surely those who ask us to accept this explanation are putting too much of a burden on our plain, every-day common sense.

The two theories which we have just examined are direct attempts to explain the disappearance of the body of Christ. They do it by trying to impeach the honesty and sincerity of Christ or His apostles. A third theory, however, proceeds on the assumption of the absolute integrity of the disciples, but takes for granted that they were credulous and self-deceived. This, which is the popular modern explanation of the facts, we may call the vision theory. It alleges that the followers of Christ were susceptible to any strong wave of emotion and that in accepting the resurrection they were simply victims of an hallucination. Mary Magdalene, according to this theory, while in the garden in an hysterical, overwrought state of mind, thought she saw a vision of her Master. She

communicated her mistaken idea to the apostles, and they readily caught the frenzy and soon fancied that they, too, saw the risen Christ. Then, honestly believing in what was really but the fruit of their own excited imagination, they announced everywhere that their Lord was alive. Fanatical enthusiasm is contagious, and it was not long before others caught the fever. As the belief grew the details of the vision became more fixed and definite, till we have the gospel tradition, with its confusions and contradictions still showing the evidence of its origin.

This is the theory; let us examine it.

Now, first of all, there is the fact that the apostles were in a condition absolutely unfavorable to the origination of ghostly visions. They were depressed and discouraged to the point of despair. "Such hallucinations are possible only when suitable mental conditions are present, the chief of which are expectancy, prepossession, and fixed idea." These were all manifestly wanting with the apostles.

Again, consider that this is not a question of one or two visions to single witnesses, but of a cloud of visions to large numbers of people. Remember, too, that these claimed not only to see Christ, but to hear Him and touch Him. Moreover, the apostles' conviction of the resurrection was beyond parallel full of results, and we have but to reflect a moment to appreciate the invariable impotency of ghost stories. "At first sight there may be some appearance of plausibility in the assertion that some crazy fanatic mistook a creation of the imagination for a reality and

persuaded others of its truth. But that considerable numbers of persons should imagine that they saw a man alive again after he had been publicly crucified and mistake this for a reality, that they should do this on several occasions separately and conjointly, and that they should found a great institution on its basis, is an assertion which makes our reason stagger." [1]

Can we imagine *a crowd* of men seeing a vision—would not some one have broken the illusion? And if they spoke to the ghost, can we suppose them hearing the spectre answer and all in the same words? Or, being alike deceived into this belief, thinking too that they had felt him by a touch? Or, admitting all these absurdities, that on such evidence they could have convinced any rational being of such an extraordinary statement as that a dead man had come to life again—most of all, that they could have won over hundreds and thousands to the impossible notion? And all this when their opponents had only to open the tomb and show the dead body, in order to expose the absurdity of the claim?

We get back, then, to the fact with which we started. Christ really died and His body was publicly buried. Where was that body? If still in the tomb, a glance at it would have pricked like a bubble the emotional frenzy of His disciples. If not in the tomb but in the possession of His enemies, they would have seen to it that the illusion was quickly dis-

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[1] Row: *Reasons for Believing in Christianity.*

pelled in the same practical fashion. If in the custody of His friends, how did it get there, and could the disillusionizing process have been much longer delayed? No, the body had disappeared, and the cause of its disappearance was that Christ had really risen from the dead.

There is, then, the strongest possible proof of the resurrection, apart from the details of the gospel narratives. We protest, however, against discounting these records. If they be rejected because of apparent inconsistencies, we reply that in any event of today half a dozen people might give as many different accounts seemingly contradictory yet perfectly capable of being reconciled and harmonized by one who was thoroughly acquainted with the facts. Or for any who doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the gospels, we may point to the witness of St. Paul. There are four of his epistles which even by skeptics are universally admitted to be genuine, and were there no other writings these four books show conclusively that the apostles believed in the resurrection of their Lord with all their heart and soul.

But, as hinted above, most powerful of all the arguments for the resurrection are the marvellous results that have sprung from it. How shall we explain the wonderful transformation of character in the apostles, or the influence of the doctrine on other lives, or such a miracle as the conversion of St. Paul? Results, again, in the Christian institutions that have survived through 1900 years: What shall we say of

the celebration of Sunday during all these centuries? The day is a weekly memorial of the resurrection, and as such has supplanted the old Sabbath. Did the change originate in an absurd error? And what contributed to the perpetuation of the mistake? What, again, shall be said of baptism, with the constant teaching that we are buried into Christ's death, to be raised into newness of life in Him? What of the Holy Communion—could it have continued as the memorial of a dead friend, if that Friend had not also proved Himself the Lord of life?

And what of the Church? Its existence is the strongest possible proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Consider "the utter impossibility of a belief in the resurrection having arisen, spread widely, been accepted without doubt, and becoming the foundation of the Christian Church on any other hypothesis than the reality of the fact." [2] How, but on the truth of the Lord's triumph over the grave, shall we account for the Church? how explain its rapid growth out of a state of depressing bewilderment and despair? or its very organization, in confidence and enthusiastic assurance after the darkness of doubt and disbelief? What shall we say of its existence through the ages, if it be not a testimony to the truth of this on which all its work and all its teaching rested? Can all the Christian life of the past nineteen centuries have been based on a delusion and a dream?

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[2] *Reasons for Believing in Christianity.*

How long does it take to prick such bubbles of belief in these days? And allowing for all differences between this age and a simpler age of faith, how long would it have taken to prick such a bubble after Christ's death? How can we possibly explain the establishment of Christianity on anything other than a foundation of absolute certainty? In considering the miracle of the resurrection, let us not forget the subsequent miracle of the Church and its ordinances of grace. Could they have been based on a delusion?

Surely not. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because nothing less than this great miracle can account for all the miraculous results that have followed in its train.

XXXI.

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

THERE is hardly any subject of religious thought that holds so keen an interest for us as that of the condition of the departed. The agony of the world sorrow has made it a bigger problem to-day than ever before. Millions of homes are homes of sorrow. Week after week, for many long years, the old questions have been asked with poignancy of multiplied grief. Thousands have sought for the answers to them. They have gone to mediums and spiritualists of every school for comfort and sure confidence. A great scientist has written a pathetic book to tell of his own search for certainty.[1]

After death—what? We must all face death ourselves sometime and we know not how soon. For all of us there is the thought of others who have gone before. Those friends and dear ones whom we have "loved long since and lost awhile"—where are they now? We have some definite idea of the life of the world to come, after the great judgment day, when

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge: *Raymond.*

the faithful have entered upon their eternal bliss; but in the meanwhile, before the time comes when we and they shall meet face to face, when if we have been faithful we shall be summoned into the presence of the Master—in the meanwhile, what of those who wait for us on the other side? Where are they? what is their spiritual condition? They are asleep, we are told: is it a sleep of torpor? or are they conscious? are they active? are they interested in us? able to do anything for us? Can we do anything for them? Do they suffer? or are they at peace? How strange it is that men have sought the answers to such questions everywhere save in the one Book in which they might best expect to find them!

We are the more eager to know the answer to these questions if we have any true conception of what death is. So often we soothe our souls with the thought that somehow death changes at once the character of those we know, that they are quite different now from what they were on earth. Yet we are all imperfect, all to some degree sinful, and death cannot act like a general absolution, making us ready at once for our new life. No, whatever more we may learn about death, it is, first of all, simply the passage from this world, with all that is so natural and familiar, to another world, unfamiliar, strange and unaccustomed, with sights and sounds new, and it cannot but be mysterious and awe-inspiring. Our bodies we must leave behind us and therefore the soul must enter this new abode stripped of all that comes through the perception of the senses. What must

the soul feel, then, if it is still conscious, at being ushered at once upon a world of which we know so little?

There is a story in one of Canon Liddon's wonderful sermons that shows the great and solemn reality of this change.[1] An Indian officer, who in his time had seen a great deal of service and had taken part in more than one of those decisive struggles by which the British authority was finally established in the East Indies, had returned to end his days in England and was talking with his friends about the most striking experiences of his professional career. They led him, by their sympathy and by their questions, to travel in memory through a long series of years. As he described skirmishes, battles, sieges, personal encounters, hair-breadth escapes, the outbreak of the mutiny and its suppression, reverses, victories—all the swift alternations of anxiety and hope which a man must know who is entrusted with command and is before the enemy—their interest in his story, as was natural, became keener and more exacting. At last he paused with the observation, "I expect to see something much more remarkable than anything I have been describing." As he was some seventy years of age and was understood to have retired from active service, his listeners failed to catch his meaning. There was a pause; and then he said, in an undertone, "I mean the first five minutes after death."

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[1] *Advent in St. Paul's*, Vol. II.

The phrase showed indeed an appreciation of the intense and awful reality of the new life and it will explain why questions about the present state of the departed have so pressing an interest. We and all these others are to stand some day at God's judgment throne and we hope and pray that the voice will sound for us, "Come, ye blessed of My Father." So we hope—but even so, the question remains, what of their state in the meanwhile, these who have gone before? They are our dearest and our best and we long to know how they live now in this strange country over whose borders they have just stepped. What does the Bible tell us of the present state of the departed?

First, we are told that they are at rest. They are released from the body with its distresses and sicknesses and so they are freed from the pain and distractions that darkened their last hours here. Later, they will be "clothed upon" with a new body; but now they are free spirits and they are at rest, because the sick and tortured frame is put aside till the day when soul and body, both cleansed and sanctified, are raised into newness of life. "They rest from their labors," too. The toils and the hardships of life no longer oppress them, for earth's conflicts have ceased. And they are free, too, from anxiety and care; they have none of the trials and difficulties of this worldly life. There "God shall wipe away all tears"; "sorrow and sighing", for them, are no more. Most of all, they are at rest because they are free from tempta-

tion; their probation is over and the subtle attacks of evil can no longer distress them and keep them back from God.

Already, then, the faithful departed are at rest. We shall see, later, that they have not yet entered upon the bliss of heaven in the vision of the Blessed Trinity, but for all that they have entered upon a spiritual repose. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: Even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors."

(2) But this rest is not an unconscious sleep. "Certainly the paradise which our Lord promised to the dying thief cannot be reasonably imagined to be a moral and mental slumber, a condition no higher than that which is produced by chloroform." So, again, the parable of Dives and Lazarus shows us men in the waiting time after death, fully conscious, quickened in thought and feeling rather than deadened and stupefied. Such hints of the other life as we have in the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration, or in the cries of the souls under the altar, show us that the blessed dead are far from resting in unconscious torpor.

(3) Not only is the present life of the departed a conscious existence, it is also a life of intense activity. Here we have the experience of our Lord Christ Himself as an example of what awaits others in their present abiding place. This experience is a typical one. Our Lord was true man; He died as man; death meant for Him, as for us, the separation of soul and body; what happened to Him is, we

may suppose, recorded to show us what will happen to others. His body was buried, as ours will be; but while "He was put to death in the flesh," He was "quickened in the spirit, in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Afterward soul and body were reunited at His resurrection. The time between our Lord's death and His resurrection, then, was a time of spiritual activity. The rest of death—rest from the toils, trials, and sorrows of earth—was not incompatible with occupation that absorbed the life of the spirit.

And so, we may imagine, it will be for us. Those who rest from their labors here will not rest in the sense that they have nothing to do. For aught we know, they also will be "quickened in the spirit"; their life will be a life of intense activity.

On what work, then, are they engaged? First their activity will result from their increasing absorption in a growing knowledge of spiritual things. Before they can enter upon the vision of God they will have much to learn of Him and this waiting time will be filled out in the acquiring of a deep and thorough knowledge of the All-Holy One. Freed from the labors of this temporal existence, their energies will be spent in securing such an acquaintance of God as was impossible for them in this life. The difference between their knowledge of God after death and the knowledge they had before will correspond to the increase of knowledge that would come to us were we able to see one of our earthly acquaintances in spirit. We know them now, but we read the life of

the soul only through its bodily manifestation. Suppose we could see a soul *unclothed*—read its thought, know its motives, have its inmost emotions unveiled—the increase of real knowledge would give some notion of the new knowledge of God that will be ours when we are ushered upon the life of the spirit.

Again, the activity of the soul after death will result from the work that it must do for self. As they learn more and more of God, so will the departed be learning more and more about themselves. All their lives will pass before them like a panorama, so that they will see the past as a whole, and as in a mirror. This knowledge will bring about a desire for improvement and growth—and we may be sure, therefore, that the souls of the departed will be actively engaged in their own purification and sanctification, in preparing themselves for the nearer presence of God that will some day be theirs.

Possibly, too, their spirits will be laboring actively for others. Who knows what share they may have, some of them, in helping companions in the middle state towards a deeper and richer life? A young priest, of pure and unselfish spirit, is suddenly taken from earth, when he has hardly yet entered fully upon his service for souls. Who knows but in the other world he may be permitted to join in the labor which His Lord began, may have been taken that he, too, should "go and preach unto the spirits in prison"? Or who, again, can tell how much the prayers of the faithful may work for us who are still in our pilgrimage? "Quickened in the spirit," may

not their petitions rise more freely to the throne of grace, and may not a devoted wife or mother or husband or father do more in this new sphere than could have been accomplished in life here?

(4) That will answer for us the next question, "Are they still interested and concerned about us?" How can they be otherwise, if they are conscious? Surely "death does not break up the community of interests that are eternal." The living and the dead have many things in common; we who are still alive and they who have gone before are members of the same great family and the same love stirs in us as moved us before our separation in the body. If we are interested in them, they must still be interested in us, still praying for us, still succoring us in ways that are past finding out. We are not told how much they know of the events of our life, how much they can see of our daily walk, but they must be able to do something for us still—for, whether they know much or little, they are not far away, but very close to us. "They have but passed from one room into another in the same building of the Lord; one and the same roof is still over us and them; they are in a better, brighter quarter of the same great Home and House of Christ, and whatever they are doing, whatever they are beholding, whatever they are enjoying, they can never forget us, nor cease to count the hours of time till we be with them." [3]

Because they do so labor and pray for us, it has

[3] Morgan Dix: *The Communion of Saints.*

been felt that we may ask the best of them to pray for us the more. Some theologians hold that the greatest of God's holy ones, the Blessed Virgin, the apostles and martyrs, the patriarchs and prophets, may already have passed to the Beatific Vision, but whether this be true or not their prayers can avail much for us. Why should we not call upon them to remember us then, it may be asked. We have no certain knowledge that they hear, it is true, but there may be means of spiritual communication of which we do not dream. At any rate there have always been some who have found great help and comfort in thus "invoking" the prayers of the saints. Our own Church has been careful to omit the practice in public worship, because of the practical dangers it was found to involve; but in private we may use this help, if we find it profitable in the spiritual life, provided we remember always that we "invoke" the prayers of the saints who are gone before, just as we would "ask" for the prayers of a good man or woman on earth. Since, however, we are uncertain that they hear, it is best to address our requests to God only and to ask Him that His saints may pray for us and that their petitions may be of avail for our help.

(5) And then, since most of the departed, at least, are still waiting for their future blessedness, we can do something for them as well as they for us. If they are not yet made perfect and if their present life is a condition of growth and continued progress in the knowledge of self and of God, we may strengthen our communion with them by praying for

their increasing advancement in the divine favor and their deepening appreciation of the divine love. They do not need our prayers in the same way as do others who are still in their earthly probation; nor do we know their needs as we know those of our earthly companions; yet we may freely ask for them whatever may be necessary for their progress, feeling even that they may in a measure depend on our petitions just as those in this world need our prayers and labors. We pour out our hearts in prayer for the dead, then, and thus realize our unbroken fellowship with them. Protestantism makes a yawning gulf between the living and the dead. We must bridge the gulf. Many, indeed, have been learning to bridge it by their prayers during the recent years. They have refused to believe that the souls of their friends have passed beyond the need of their care and sympathy.

For thousands of years such prayers have been used by Christians, and they are found in every liturgy of the ancient Church. Hundreds of years before Christ they were in use among the Israelites. As they formed a part of the worship of the synagogue, our Lord Himself and His apostles must have used them; at any rate He speaks no word in condemnation of the custom. In the last few years the sorrow of the world has brought thousands back to the practice of the Church in that "age of faith".

It is safe, surely, for us to follow that practice and to make more real our remembrance of the departed by praying for them. With St. Paul,

we may ask for them "mercy in that day". With the ancient Church we may ask that they be granted eternal rest and that light perpetual may shine upon them. Our connection with them has not ceased and until we and they alike have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, they may need our prayers as we need theirs, though ours for them must necessarily be less definite and particular, because we know so little of their special needs. Thus in memorials of those who have lived and died in the Lord, in loving prayers for their happy progress, we shall remain in closer communion with them until we who are now in the burden and heat of the day join them in the rest of paradise. In that hour of death, and in the day of judgment, by Thy cross and passion, Good Lord, deliver us!

XXXII.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

AN English chaplain tells of a young soldier who addressed him publicly in this fashion: "Sir, somebody has been saying back home that a man who dies for his country goes straight to heaven whatever his life may have been beforehand. Do you think it is true? If a chap gives his life in this way, will he be all right on the other side, even if he hasn't been quite straight here, or will he have to go to hell?" [1] What struck the chaplain was not merely the naïve simplicity of the question but a certain wistfulness behind it. He told the questioner that we might trust God about it.

> **Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde:**
> **Hae mercy on my soul, Lord God;**
> **As I would do, were I Lord God,**
> **And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.**

That is the way an old epitaph, in the north of Scotland puts it. The chaplain also urged that usually the issue was not quite so sharp as the question had made it. Few of us are fit for highest

[1] Campbell: *The War and the Soul.*

heaven and few of us are bad enough for the deepest hell.

In the Church's doctrine of the Intermediate State we have the real answer to difficulties like this—difficulties which some voice only hesitatingly, which others put forth rather brazenly and flippantly, which all of us feel more or less keenly. In the last chapter it was taken for granted that men do not go at once after death to their final abiding place, but that there is this intermediate state where even the most faithful of the departed must wait until they are made ready for fulness of life in God's presence.

It has been supposed, possibly, by some who do not accept this teaching, that since it postpones the day of complete blessedness for the departed it must detract in some measure from our Christian consolation in the hour of death. If we examine the subject more closely, however, we shall see that the Church view, far from taking away our confidence and certain hope when we are called upon to part with loved ones, is really in numberless cases full of the greatest possible comfort. As a matter of fact, must not those who think that after death the righteous soul goes at once to heaven be staggered at tracing this idea to its logical negative and contemplating the fate of those who cannot without great straining of language be numbered among the faithful?

For, after all, what sort of people are the great majority of those at whose graves we say the final prayers of committal? How few of them, even on the most charitable view of the case, can be thought

of as in any degree fit for heaven! Weak, wavering, sinful souls many of them were, having some good qualities, it is true, but very imperfect and very unworthy to enter into the presence of their Creator. Such goodness as they have is rather *in germ,* often wholly undeveloped and incomplete. They are not among those who have wilfully and absolutely rejected God (though perhaps some of them have come perilously near it) and so we trust they are not among the finally impenitent or lost, but if the choice must be made then and there in their present state, apart from the hope of future development and progress in holiness, who could say that there was much hope of heaven for them?

And then that multitude of souls who have never had our Lord and His redemptive work properly presented to them, the heathen, the dwellers in the slums of a great city, the ignorant and uninstructed everywhere—what about them? If there is no chance that somewhere they may be subjected to a purifying process and developed in the life of grace, we can have little hope. But if it is believed that there is such a place and such a hope, then perhaps God will accept them, since they have never deliberately and absolutely rejected Him, because He finds in them at least the beginnings of goodness, seed that is undeveloped but may grow in another field under the watchful care of His saints and angels. If they must enter at once into life or else be reserved for death, could our hope be as strong or our hearts as free to trust that all will be well?

This it is that sometimes leads those who have been brought up under the ordinary Protestant influence to revolt from what they erroneously believe to be the orthodox doctrine of the judgment. Seeing how few there are for whom we may have any reasonable hope of an immediate entrance into heaven and yet shrinking from the consignment of such imperfect souls to Satan, they have been led to provide a merciful solution of the problem by denying altogether everlasting punishment or resting in the hope that for such as these there is another probation after death. In the next chapter we shall consider eternal loss and shall see how little logic there is in wholly rejecting it if we yet hold to a belief in the divine knowledge of our Lord Christ, who apparently asserts its awful reality. As for the other solution—a probation after death—the doctrine of the Intermediate State solves the difficulty without resorting to any such uncertain theory.

The Bible, as interpreted by the Church, would seem to show that probation ends with death. We are constantly taught that this period of our earthly life is our time of trial and testing and that there is no other. Indeed, to suppose that men in some future state might change from a life predominantly evil to one that is good would imply that others might be in danger of changing from good to evil—and death would have greater terrors for us than now. Quite different is a belief in the Intermediate State, yet quite as comforting for those who fear for themselves or their friends. It teaches that God in His

goodness accepts the soul at death not for what it actually has become but for what it will become, not because it is developed in goodness but because the seeds of goodness are there and are not so choked by the evil as to be incapable of growth. As we stand at the grave of some weak brother whose life wavered so uncertainly between right and wrong, we may have fresh hope; we may believe that when he departed this life he was (taking things at large and on the whole) upon the right side. There was more of good than evil in him, his *tendency* was upward rather than downward, and though he was very imperfect God mercifully took him as he was, to develop the good in him till he should be prepared for the eternal life. This does not mean that he is to have a second probation, but that, taking it all in all, he stood his probation here and that now in a place of preparation the evil is gradually to be purged away so that he may be made fit for heaven. So, those who have never heard the gospel or to whom it has never been preached aright or whose environment has made it impossible that they should have ears to hear it—such are judged according to the light they had, and they too need no new probation, only the carrying on and developing of what such probation as they had has made them here.

Indeed, of heaven itself we are not told that it will be one dead level of happiness—there may be degrees of blessedness. In the Father's house are many mansions and some of these may be the final abode of the most saintly, some the abode of those

who never attained such heights of holiness. Allowing for all that and believing that in the Intermediate State each soul is preparing for its own place in the heavenly mansions, we may have hope for many of whom we should otherwise despair.

It may be urged that such arguments lead to an easy-going attitude towards sin and encourage men in carelessness and indifference of living, but the experience of those who have put much stress on it in their teaching is the very opposite. Rather, it gives men hope and arouses a greater perseverance in some who might otherwise rebel or despair. Instead of despondently giving up the struggle they take fresh courage; they know they are not saints, but they have in this teaching a new incentive to make the best they can of the remaining years of life, even though obliged to battle continually against old habits and besetting sins.

Perhaps it would have been well, before saying all this, if we had stated as briefly as possible our grounds for believing in the Intermediate State. The arguments in reason have already been shown by implication, *viz.*: that even those who die in grace, however holy their lives may have been, are by no means prepared to enter at once upon the joys of the heavenly life and rest in the perpetual contemplation of the Ever-blessed Triune God. They need to be purged most thoroughly from the sins that defiled their souls during life, they need much progress in holiness, before they can enter the divine presence.

As to the evidence of Scripture (for of course we know nothing about it except what revelation teaches and reason accepts) St. Paul has several passages which imply the thought. We need not dwell upon these for it is enough that our own hearts tell us that before we enter into glory we must, of necessity, dwell for a time in some place of purification waiting till our souls have been made fit for the Master.

There are several Scripture passages, however, which we can hardly pass over. For example: On the cross, a moment before his death, the penitent thief pleaded for mercy, and our Lord answered him, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Did He mean that the thief was to go at once to heaven? In the first place, our Lord Himself did not ascend thither until more than forty days later; in the second place, that one act of penitence, though it brought the sinner pardon, did not prepare him to enter immediately the inner presence chamber of God's house. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" evidently therefore refers to his presence with Christ in some intermediate abode of the blessed dead.

So of our Lord Himself an experience is related that bears on the question. Being perfect man, Christ went through all that happens to men at their death. His body was buried; His human soul went to some waiting place of the departed; on Easter morning His soul and body were reunited, and He arose and appeared among men, bringing them a pledge and token that their souls and bodies would be reunited and that they would rise too. St. Peter tells

us that, put to death in the flesh, He revived in spirit, *i.e.*, in the soul as contrasted with the body, and in the spirit He went to the place of departed spirits, the souls in safe custody, and to them proclaimed the glad tidings of redemption. Even after He had risen from the grave He did not go at once to heaven, but said of Himself, "I am not yet ascended unto My Father."

What our Lord tells us, moreover, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus shows us that the righteous immediately after death go not to heaven, but to some temporary resting place. Lazarus reposes in "Abraham's bosom" until the general day of judgment—which has not yet come, since the rich man speaks of his brethren as still in their earthly probation.

The thought of the Intermediate State (or paradise or purgatory, if one prefers to call it either) will show us why the Church has always believed in the efficacy of prayers for the dead. The life after death is a time of further discipline and progress, where those who are saved are subjected to some purifying process to prepare them for heaven. For this, then, our prayers may help them. Any petitions we make could not aid them were they lost; such prayers they no longer need as a stay against temptation; but they may need them (and we have every reason to believe will be helped by them) in the way of advancing their spiritual growth and development. It is for such purposes that our prayers are offered for

those who are gone before—that they may have light, peace, rest, refreshment, growth in the divine favor, increasing knowledge of the divine love. "Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, and let light perpetual shine upon them." Because in measure all men die with something yet to be done for their souls, with some light still needed, with something of spiritual progress necessary, therefore for all men prayers after death, somewhat vague and indefinite as they must be, will yet accomplish good and will bring aid and succor there, as they give it here. He who began a good work in us not only carries it on during this earthly life but will continue it until the great day, "the day of Jesus Christ." It cannot be unavailing to offer our prayers in aid of this good work and to omit to do so would be "to imply that all connection between the departed and ourselves had ceased, than which nothing could be more untrue."

XXXIII.

HEAVEN AND HELL

I TRUST it will not be thought flippant if I start this chapter by reminding my readers that a good many of us, for more than four years past, have been puzzling ourselves over the question as to what would be a just and righteous thing to do to the group of men who were responsible for the unspeakable outrages against humanity which marked the Prussian conduct of the war. Just what would be a fitting place in which to put them or a fitting sentence to inflict upon them? What ought to become of those who deliberately planned the devastation of Poland and Armenia, the ruin of Serbia, the outrage against Belgium, the barbarism in northern France? What punishment would be considered adequate for those who were morally responsible for the sinking of the Lusitania, the murder of Edith Cavell, the crucifixion of captured soldiers, the enslavement of industrial workers, the ravishing of women, the mutilation of children, the deliberate destruction of property apart from war necessities, the ruin of churches, the defile-

ment of altars and the host of other horrors that marked the war?

At this time it may be best that these things shall be forgotten rather than avenged, but who *can* forget them, who in this generation ever will forget them? Certainly it does not become us to single out individuals (for we cannot tell degrees of responsibility and guilt) and consign them to punishment. That is not what I mean. I am only trying to say that for four years, whether we ought to have done it or not, we have been asking questions like this and we have answered them in the most astonishing possible way, considering that we are a people who had come to believe in a loose, lax, kindly, benevolent deity whose sense of righteous wrath was wholly lost in His undiscriminating affection.

Well, then. All this is introductory to the thought that there *are* people in the world—never mind who or how many—but there are some of whom we can have little hope that they will ever be fit for heaven. It is somewhat surprising to find those who have steadily refused to face difficult facts now suddenly become most violent, pronouncing emphatic judgment where it is best to speak, if we must speak, only with hesitancy and reserve. The fact is, the war atrocities have opened our eyes to the awfulness of unrepented sin and forced us to consider what may be the final issue of such impenitent guilt. We cannot decide in any individual case, and so long as life remains we continue always to hope; but there are

some, apparently, in whom all good is extinguished. We can hardly escape, then, the thought of hell as a place of punishment for the wicked.

If it be asked how we reconcile the existence of such a place or state of everlasting punishment with belief in the goodness of God, we answer that there are many things which we cannot expect to understand fully here and that this is one of them. We need not be ashamed to say of this as of other things, "I do not know."

One thing, however, we should remember: that what we are told of everlasting punishment comes from the lips of our Lord Christ Himself. It is not in the Old Testament only, with its stern views of God's justice, that we find the doctrine, it is in His teaching also. He to whom we owe all we know of a future life, He who showed such tender pity toward the weakness of men, taught with the utmost solemnity that a terrible doom was impending on sinners. Because they were lost He came to save them, and if in spite of all that He did there were yet some who were hardened against the divine grace until good became evil to them and evil good, He said that they might be found guilty of a sin such as "shall not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come." If it was possible for such words to fall from the lips of Him who is Love Incarnate, it behooves us to approach the subject with humble mind. It is a part of the mystery of evil, an outgrowth of the gift of free will, and our finite minds are incapable of understanding fully what stretches back to the creation and

on through eternity. If, however, the doctrine was not an impossible one to Jesus Christ, with all His love, His mercy, His purity of soul, it need not be rejected by us, as incompatible with divine love. We should remember that our minds are clouded with sin, our hearts sullied by repeated acts of rebellion against God. We are hardly capable of deciding for ourselves moral issues on which the All-Holy One has pronounced decision. If He could say, in words so solemn in their awful self-restraint, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," we must believe that in some way a fate so pronounced is quite consistent with perfect love and justice.

We must bear in mind, too, that God cannot be charged with the fate of the finally impenitent. He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." If there are some who do perish it will not be for any lack of effort on His part to prevent the calamity. All that divine love *can* do to hold back the sinner from his fate, *will* be done, we may be sure. None will be lost whom God could save without destroying His own gift of free will. In other words, the punishment of the lost will be inherent rather than retributive. In the case of a child who obstinately and persistently continues in disobedience a certain alienation results which of itself is a punishment. The parent still loves the child and still yearns for his return, but the child, by his own wilfulness, cuts himself off from the blessing that might be his and inflicts upon himself his own punishment. He is wilfully in a state of separation, and his

self-inflicted punishment must last so long as this alienation endures.

Nor are we to confuse the doctrine of eternal punishment with theories of men as to who will undergo this awful fate or the number of the lost or the character of their punishment. Of all this we know but little. We are not intended to know more or it would have been revealed to us. The late Dr. Paget reminds us that whoever may be in the abode of the lost will contain and maintain its dreadful secret within himself and *no one will be in hell who would not bring hell with him wherever he went.* As just said, the punishment will be inherent and self-inflicted. Dr. Paget gives an illustration[1] to show something of what hell is. Think, he says, of a man with a downright bad, ill-conditioned heart, coming home one evening from a place where he has been engaged in some vile, mean, degrading sin—coming home with his mind full of horrid lust and sullenness. His wife is waiting for him. She has tried to make the room look as bright as she can. Two of his children are staying up to kiss him and say good-night to him before they go to bed. As soon as he opens the door he sees all the love that is waiting, bright and true and tender, to bid him welcome, but it only hardens his cruel heart. He hates it all for being so unlike himself; hates it for leaving him nothing to grumble at; hates it because he has no love in him with which to meet it. He scowls at the children and

[1] *Oxford House Papers*, first series, chapter viii.

curses his wife and then sits down by the fire to spend his time in sulky silence and vile thoughts and stupid, senseless rage. Who is to blame for it? *Anyhow, not the wife.* Now, just imagine a heart settled down utterly and deliberately into such a temper; a heart that has finally stamped out of itself all lingering traits or movements of tenderness; a heart in which there remains no faculty, no power of really loving anything at all. What can such a heart do, but only go on and on in the black despair and misery of perpetual hatred? And how can such misery ever have an end? And what is this but hell? And who is to blame for it? *Anyhow, not Almighty God.*

In other words, what God judges and condemns is character. No man is rejected because he did this or that. His condemnation is based on the fact that he has become what he is; and he is not finally lost until he has so degenerated that he can never become anything else.

In this we see something of what the final judgment will be. There is a particular judgment at the hour of death for each individual when his or her fate is determined, but in the final judgment this sentence will be published and made known to all men and so plainly set forth that all will see how inevitable was the decree. The last great judgment will be the revelation of all of God's purposes from the beginning. We shall see that God's hand has been over all things; we shall know why He permitted evil to exist; we shall understand why He judges, and how; we shall realize His absolute goodness and justice. If some

are lost, it will be made plain that lives such as theirs could have had no other issue. If endless punishment, rather than annihilation, be their fate, it will be apparent that characters are judged, not deeds, that it is not what we have done but what we are that makes judgment necessary—and what we are we shall always be. The condemnation of the wicked may mean simply that they are left to themselves to remain as they are forever. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him he holy still."

I have written thus far as my own reason interprets revelation and as I believe the mind of the Church in the past has interpreted it. I am free to confess that my heart rebels against some of the things my head accepts. I have no quarrel with others who read things differently; I wish I could read them otherwise myself.

Yet I do not believe that the teaching of Scripture about the punishment of the impenitent is the real difficulty. It is not so much what is to be done with evil that troubles me. It is rather the fact that evil was ever permitted to be. That problem has been discussed in a previous chapter and if I made myself clear there it was evident that I felt we must be content to leave the problem as an unsolved mystery. So it is with the question of the end of the wicked. I am leaving it unsolved. For myself I am content to confess ignorance; I am willing not to know. With

those whose course of reasoning is other than my own, I do not dispute. As to all that I conscientiously believe the thought of the Church has permitted I may best quote one of her greatest scholars and theologians:[2]

"The universalism which is so popular to-day—the belief that every created spirit must ultimately be recovered to fulfil the end of its being in God—though it is supported by some early Christian authorities and though it has never been formally condemned by the Church with any ecumenical judgment, is flatly contrary, plainly contrary, to the language used by our Lord about the destinies of men and generally to the language of the New Testament. I do not think, however, that by excluding universalism we are absolutely shut up into the almost intolerable belief in unending conscious torment for the lost. The language of the Bible does not necessarily suggest this. I do not think that it supplies us with any ground for the dogma that the consciousness of a man once created is indestructible. Final moral ruin may involve, I cannot but think, such a dissolution of personality as carries with it the cessation of personal consciousness. In this way the final ruin of irretrievably lost spirits, awful as it is to contemplate, may be found consistent with St. Paul's anticipation of a universe in which ultimately God is to be all in all—which does not seem to be really compatible with the existence of a region of everlastingly tormented

[2] Gore: *The Religion of the Church*, p. 83.

and rebellious spirits—while at the same time the awful warnings of our Lord and His apostles as to the inevitable consequences of wilful final sin supply, to every one who chooses to think at all, a most powerful motive to prefer any effort to the risk of 'losing his own soul'."

It will be well to let this subject rest in the mystery in which it is left by God and to consider rather the comforting doctrine of the certainty of heaven, at last, for all who are saved. We have not space to deal with the subject at length but only to suggest a few thoughts on different aspects of it.

(1) The first is that so far as we know there may be degrees of blessedness in heaven, according as we dwell in one or another of the "many mansions" in the spiritual realm. We shall all be rewarded with the beatific vision of the Blessed Trinity, but there may well be differing degrees of spiritual insight and while the reward will be the same for each of us who is saved the capacity for receiving it may differ according as we have attained in our life on earth. The heavenly life need not be all on one level.

(2) As there are differing degrees of blessedness, so there may be different duties and different stations, involving of course no separation between souls who have known each other here, but allowing manifold opportunities for varied service. One will be over five cities, another over ten, and some will be set on thrones judging, or governing, the twelve tribes of the new Israel. The life of heaven will be a life of

activity, not of idleness: who could possibly conceive of indolence as synonymous with happiness?

(3) Another thought is, that the chief characteristic of the heavenly life will be the absolute conformity of our wills to the will of God. The office of His creatures there will be to do His service, and since this can be happiness to them only in so far as His work is a delight, they must have their desires wholly centered in Him, or heaven would not be heaven at all.

This will explain, perhaps, why some could not be happy, even if in spite of their sin they were permitted to enter heaven. How could a man who never gave one thought to the service of God here, to whom the offices of prayer were a tedious task, who did not acknowledge His sovereignty or give a single thought to His existence, whose life was selfish and utterly unloving—how could such a man live in heaven, even if he were permitted to enter there, where the praise and worship and service of the Almighty must occupy every thought of the heart through all eternity?

The heavenly life will be an absolute conformity to the will of God: how much that will explain, too, about life here! In what should our Christian effort consist? Not wholly in the avoidance of sin, nor chiefly in seeking some better motive than our own interest, but rather in trying to act simply, solely, exclusively from a desire to be obedient to the known appointment of God.

Moreover, there is suffering here, sorrow, affliction. May it not be that God sometimes makes use

of these to help us to subordinate our wills to His, teaching us to say from the heart, "Thy will be done"? When things are hard and life is full of bitterness, we are to work on, feeling that God may be giving us this trial to test us, that if we succeed it will be a stepping stone to higher sonship hereafter, knowing that the angels, the saints, our own departed perhaps, God Himself, are looking on us and rejoicing that we are running our course well, that we are gradually becoming so conformed to what God would have us be that our wills are growing into unity with His.

(4) This will bring up again the question of the lost. It is sometimes asked how we can ever be happy, even in heaven, if we know that any one soul has perished and more particularly if any one whom we ourselves have known and loved is shut out from the beatific vision. May we not find the answer in the fact that although God loves all souls His love can find no place of lodgment in such as are given over entirely to evil and that if our will is in perfect harmony with His the same will be true of us? For what is it, after all, that arouses lasting affection? Is it not something of good in the soul? If there is no trace of this nor yet hope of it for true love to rest upon, must not love be baffled? If all likeness to God is gone, all touch of His goodness lost, will there be anything on which a right affection can expend itself? This, at least, may be a hint to the explanation of what cannot possibly be made absolutely plain. At any rate, then we shall see in some measure as

God sees, we shall know all that is to be known; and, because at last we understand, no disturbing element will mar our perfect happiness.

Then we shall understand, but as yet we know but little. We do know, however, all that we need for life in the present. Here, as we live day by day deeds are forming habits and habits are forming character and when character becomes fixed our fate is determined for all eternity. No smallest action of our daily life, therefore—no word, no thought even—is insignificant. Each goes to make us what we shall be, for weal or woe, forever. And without Thee, O God, we are unable to please Thee. Let Thy Holy Spirit direct and rule our hearts. Let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend us. Without Thee nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy, that Thou being our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord.

XXXIV.

THE ANGELIC WORLD

IN the first year of the Great War a story ran like wildfire over England, telling of a host of angelic beings who were seen at Mons and had stayed the oncoming rush of the German invaders. The story was disproved. Investigation showed that it had its origin in the poetic imagination of a newspaper man. He had seen the Germans stopped, when to stop them seemed unbelievable and impossible. That they were halted by that thin, worn line of British soldiers was nothing less than a miracle. It meant that God was on the side of the defenders of liberty and righteousness. Nothing less than His presence could have saved them against such terrible odds. The writer threw this into poetic form and the result was the story of the angels at Mons.

Disproved or not, however, the tale of the angelic helpers would not down. There are those to-day who still believe it, despite the clear evidence of the source of the story. And why should it be thought impossible? We know that we are no longer to expect external evidence of the presence of spiritual powers

back of the visible universe—that day of vision has probably passed—just as we no longer have the visible presence of Jesus Christ on earth, but have something better to take the place of what at most would have been local and limited. There is evidence enough of the presence and power of God in His world. Whether we see them or not, then, why should it be thought impossible that He works through spiritual agents?

Nature itself is so wonderful and we have learned so much in recent years of the principles that produce phenomena so long seen and so little understood, why should we ever halt at mystery? To be told, for example, that the air which surrounds us is pervaded by a subtle ether and that this is in continual vibration from waves of light and sound, crossing and recrossing each other at innumerable points till the whole is like a quivering mass of jelly; to be told that this "ethereal gelatine" is as solid as adamant; to be informed that it permeates the most solid substances and that through some of these waves of electricity may penetrate where waves of light cannot—these are things which, to be sure, are capable of a certain kind of proof, but which most of us have not proved though we accept them as part of our every-day belief.

Indeed, the whole world is full of mystery. "Go into the fields," says Canon MacColl,[1] "on a still, sultry day in summer, when there is not a breath of wind to stir the air about you. All nature seems

[1] *Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals.*

asleep; the cattle lie slumbering in the shade; the birds are silent in the groves; not a leaf flutters in the woods; not a blade of grass waves in the meadow; there is apparently an entire absence of life and movement. But if you had eyes that could penetrate through leaf and stem, through blade of grass and soil and rock, and if you had ears that could catch the secret harmonies of nature, you would be amazed at the multitude of sights and sounds that would be suddenly revealed to you. You would find that there was no stillness at all in the landscape that erstwhile appeared to be so fast asleep. There is movement everywhere. The tree, whose leaves droop motionless in the noonday heat and whose trunk stands erect against the sky, is throbbing with currents of life rushing through every pore. A stream of sap is coursing between bark and tissue and millions of vesicles empty themselves every moment through all its leaves. There is not a blade of grass in the field that is not palpitating with the life that is incessantly circulating through it." It is Canon Newbolt, I think, who says that if we had ears to hear we should turn mad at "the unceasing roar which goes on always just the other side of silence."

Why is it, then, that we hesitate and draw back when we hear something no whit more remarkable about the spiritual realm? The Bible tells us that just as this natural world is so mysterious a thing in its quivering activity so there is also around and above us another mysterious life, a great spirit world, a heavenly host of the messengers of God, ever doing

Him service and ever at His command succoring and defending us in the manifold perplexities of our daily work and duty. Surely, if one can accept the revelations of science with so calm and composed a belief we need not smile in compassionate incredulity when another revelation steps in with its wonderful story and asks us at least to listen before we turn away to scoff. Let us briefly summarize, then, what the Bible tells us of this angelic world.

First, we are told that it exists. There can be no doubt at all of that in the mind of one who believes in the inspiration of Scripture. The Bible is full of accounts of angelic beings. They appear to the patriarchs of the early Jewish dispensation; they are seen in visions by prophets; one of them brings the news of our Lord's advent to Zacharias and the Virgin Mother; they herald our Lord's birth; they succor Him in His temptation and in His agony; they roll away the great stone from His grave and afterward guard the empty tomb; they proclaim His resurrection and hover about Him at His ascension; they aid His imprisoned disciples; they people His courts in the heavenly places shown to the seer on Patmos. Yes, the angels exist.

Next, we are told something of their mode of existence. It is like what our own resurrection life is to be, when we shall be as the angels in heaven who neither marry nor are given in marriage. The words imply that the angels did not come into existence after the same manner of propagation as do men;

they are the immediate creation of God, as their name (sons of God) would indicate. Godet has pointed out that we might expect this from what we know of life here on earth. For, first we have vegetable life—species without individuality; then animal life—in which individuality exists, but is over-shadowed by species; then man himself—where we find species and individuality again, but now with individuality as the predominant fact. Why not, therefore, the last measure of the equation, angelic life, in which there is individuality without species? In other words, with the angels there is no unity of substance by which all would have kinship one with another, but each individual stands by himself, with no such common ties as bind the human race together in a union so strong that we are linked with all our fellows by virtue of that nature which we all inherit from our first forefather. God created individuals from whom the race has descended in an unbroken line of natural birth, but He did not so create the angels; each was made directly by the Creator's hand.[2]

The angels, then, exist; and their mode of existence is peculiar in that they are the immediate creation of God, each taking life from Him and not existing by any secondary and mediate act of propagation. We have yet to inquire what relations, if any, they bear to nature and to man. And, first, to nature.

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[2] *Old Testament Studies.*

It has been supposed from certain passages of Scripture that the angels were not only the first created beings but that they form a kind of "spiritual substratum" in which (to put it rather crudely and after a homely figure of speech) material things were afterward planted. In the Book of Job we read that at the creation of the world the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God—the angels—shouted for joy; from which it is inferred that before the earth came into existence the angels were present waiting for this new manifestation of God's love. It is impossible to settle any theory very definitely from language that is highly poetical, but other hints in the Bible certainly lead us to the same conclusion and there seems also a special significance in our Lord's words, recorded by St. John, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,"—ascending and then descending: as if their home were here on earth, and they left it only that having departed for a time, they might return with gifts for us. They were here before we were, here before the world itself was created, here as the idea of things, the counterparts or doubles in the spiritual world of the material things in the natural world; an unseen universe back of this visible one, giving this its beauty and at the same time having some control over its powers. Four angels hold the four winds, in the revelation of St. John; another angel has power over the fire; everywhere we have a picture of these angelic guardians, presiding over nature's forces, giving her that charm

which attracts us more and more the deeper our spiritual life becomes and standing in such close connection with her that the sacred writers call upon sun and moon, fire and hail, snow and vapor, through their angelic counterparts, to praise and magnify the Lord.

Surely there is something inspiring in such a view of nature. "What," asks Cardinal Newman,[3] "would be the thoughts of a man who, when examining a flower, or an herb, or a pebble, or a ray of light, which he treats as something so beneath him in the scale of existence, suddenly discovered that he was in the presence of some powerful being who was hidden behind the visible things he was inspecting—who, though concealing his wise hand, was giving them their beauty and grace and perfection, as being God's instrument for that purpose, nay whose robe and ornaments those objects were"—for "every breath of air and ray of light, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God."

We see, then, the relation the angels bear to nature —how they lie back of the visible world, giving it of their radiance and loveliness. Let us look next at what Scripture tells us of their relations to men. Of the reality of this relationship we are assured by our Lord's own words, when He tells us not to despise the weak and the little ones, because in heaven their

[3] *Apologia Pro Vita Sua.*

angels do always behold the face of the Father as they stand in His immediate presence.

So we learn that angels, sent to succor and defend us on earth, give us their protection ("He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways"); they nourish men and minister to their wants, as they did to Elijah when he lay under the juniper tree and to our Lord in His temptation and in the agony of Gethsemane; they bring messages to us, as Gabriel did at the Annunciation or as did the company who appeared to the shepherds the first Christmas night; they assist in our worship: St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians about reverence in the services of the Church, tells them that the angels are always near them, pleased at what is devout and fitting, grieved at all irreverence and carelessness.

Whether or not each soul has its particular guardian angel, it is clear that these spiritual beings take a deep interest in the affairs of men, watching over Christ's little ones and rejoicing over His penitents. God's kingdom embraces angels as well as men, and though we are not united to them by the ties of nature, the Father has seen good to knit us to them by their offices of love in a bond that will be even closer hereafter than it is now. Nations also seem to have their angelic guardians and advocates, such as the "Prince of Persia" and the "Prince of Grecia", and perhaps Churches also have their "angels", though the meaning of the term in connection with the seven Churches of Asia is not altogether clear. It may be that their various duties, too, account

for gradations of rank among them—angels, archangels, etc.—though possibly St. Peter and St. Paul, in enumerating these ranks, may be simply adopting the language of the heretical teachers whose doctrine they are opposing.

Finally, as there are good angels who guard and protect us, so there are evil ones, fallen spirits who are working against men—spirits who still retain much of their old power and are therefore terrible foes in the war they wage with us. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," says St. Paul, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." At the head of this host of fallen spirits is Satan, an archangel who fell through pride, carried away others with him and has now become the incarnation of evil. It has been supposed by some that the title given him by our Lord, "the Prince of this World," shows that the earth was originally intended to be Satan's own kingdom and that he has therefore a special hatred against men as the possessors of his former power. That he did have some such dominion seems to be implied in his words to our Lord, "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it."

At the head of the company of the blessed spirits, however, is St. Michael, the vanquisher of Satan and leader of the hosts of heaven. His name (Michael means "Who is like unto God?") shows the immeasurable distance that separates even the highest of cre-

ated beings from the Creator Himself. Michael is the warrior of God, while Gabriel ("God's hero") is His messenger, the heavenly evangelist. Both alike minister to men, though in different ways.

Tried and tempted as we are here, we have therefore in the thought of this angelic creation a constant reminder that we are not struggling alone. If it is hard, sometimes, to realize God's help and presence, we shall find a stimulus to faith in the recollection of these princes and champions of the heavenly realm who hover around us, ever ready to do God's bidding on our behalf; for so our spiritual senses will be quickened, and from the thought of these His servants we shall the sooner rise to the thought of God, who is our ever-present Helper and Defender. We shall the more readily, too, rejoice in the great love of God in sending these radiant ones to minister to our comfort—a love so unselfish that He is willing to share with others of His creatures our grateful response to it by making them the bearers of His grace and therefore our benefactors. As in thankful love we praise the Giver of all this goodness, we shall look forward with deeper faith and fuller joy to the day when the bliss now given to these holy spirits shall be ours as well, when we, too, shall stand in God's presence and with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven shall laud and magnify His glorious name, joining in the seraphic hymn and ever more praising Him and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High."

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